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Cover Picture

Anthony Jenkinson's map of Russia, in Ortelius's atlas, 1574, discussed in Walter Oakeshott's article on pages 703-4.

Encounters with the exotic

James Clifford

VICTOR SEGALAN

Les Immémoriaux

220pp. Paris: Seuil.

202 004 69 3

Peintures

231pp. Paris: Gallimard.

207 023 075 9

The most detailed account of Paul Gauguin's last weeks was sent to Paris from the Marquesas by a young naval doctor, Victor Segalen, who arrived just too late to meet the great recluse. It was a significant missed rendezvous, for Segalen was to become a writer of major importance in what may be called a post-symbolist "poetics of displacement". This movement, dramatized by Gauguin's flight from Europe, had already sent Rimbaud to Abyssinia. It would propel Cendrars around the globe, Leiris to Africa, Artaud to the Tarahumans. The new poetics rejected well-established styles of exoticism: those, for example, of a Pierre Loti. And it differed from the quest of a Claudel for a profound, "inside" *Connnaissance de l'est*. The new poetics would reckon with more troubling, less stable encounters with the exotic.

Segalen was the prototypical modern, or perhaps modernist, traveller. Born in Brittany in 1878, he voyaged widely in Polynesia from 1902 to 1905 and in China, where he spent nearly five years before his death in 1919. A poet, novelist, archaeologist and travel writer, Segalen participated in the Paris literary milieu of late symbolism - but from a distance. His work is hard to define. An expanded genre of "travel literature" comes closest, but cannot finally accommodate the full range. Segalen would perhaps be most content to be called, simply, a writer of "exoticism". But first the term would have to be cleansed of its myriad connections with swaying palms, beaches, teeming markets, Tibetan monasteries, dangerous (African, Malaysian, Amazonian) jungles, "the wisdom of the East", the pleasures and ironies of travel by rail, on shipboard, and so forth. Segalen redefines exoticism as an "aesthetic of the diverse". In a long, essay on the subject, begun many times but never finished, he attacks the predictable narratives and décor of most travel writing (Loti is his chief target) and substitutes troubling encounters with the unexpected, the

strangely familiar, the unformed. Exoticism emerges as a generalized condition of his friend Jules de Gaultier's "law of Bovaryism", by which "every being in conceiving of itself conceives itself as necessarily other than it is". Making the most of this modern anomie, Segalen's exoticist extends and discovers an identity by means of a perpetual series of detours.

His own life of travel was an incomplete quest for a self among the others - in Polynesia (where he wrote as an advocate of threatened native cultures) and, most intimately, in China. By the time of his early death at the age of forty-one, wasted by an undiagnosed illness, he had produced the elements of a major oeuvre. During his lifetime, however, only three books were published: *Les Immémoriaux* (1917), a novel about the destruction of Tahitian culture in the shock of contact with the Occident; *Siècles* (1912), poems composed in the manner of Chinese funerary inscriptions, and *Peintures* (1916), prose poems evoking imaginary Chinese paintings. In the ten years following his death other works appeared: *Hommage à Gauguin*, *Orphée roi* (in collaboration with Debussy), *Equipee* (the poetic journal of a trek to the edge of the Himalayas), a collection of *Odes* in Chinese style, and *René Leys*, perhaps Segalen's masterpiece, a strange parody of a mystery novel, set in Peking and concerned with the secrets of the Forbidden City during the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty.

Over the years Segalen's oeuvre has enjoyed a secret reputation, nourished by the publication of new *indis*. Recently, with a renewed general interest in things Chinese, and with a growing sensitivity to the epistemological problems of writing across cultural boundaries, Segalen's meditations on his exotic encounters have acquired fresh significance. A flurry of publications has brought nearly twenty titles into print, making it possible, finally, to perceive the depth and variety of his writing. The distinguished small press, Fata Morgana, has supplied six works, including a collection of Polynesian studies, *Gauguin dans son dernier décor*, the superb travel account *Briques et tuiles*; *Le Double Rimbaud*, and the unfinished *Essai sur l'exotisme*. These, along with the recently republished *René Leys*, *Les Immémoriaux*, *Equipee*, and *Peintures*, make it possible to survey the principal outlines of Segalen's work. Unfortunately, for the moment very little exists in English: only a study of *The Great Statuary of China* (University of

Chicago Press), selected *Stelae* (Unicorn Press) translated by Nathaniel Tarn, and a version of *René Leys* by J.R. Underwood, published by an obscure Chicago house, J.A.O'Hara, and, like *Stelae*, virtually unobtainable.

A traveller's phenomenological "body" can often be quite precisely located. Certain writers are happiest with the view and conversation organized by a moving train-compartment. Saul Steinberg, liked America as seen from the back of a Greyhound bus (the old model, without tinted glass); it gave him, he said, a "cavalier's" perspective. This was Segalen's viewpoint, a distance - both aesthetic and political - from which to engage the other. Travelling through China, he is never intimately looking into people's lives, like a candid photographer, or rubbing elbows with the crowd; and he is seldom face to face with individuals. He seems, in his texts, to be on horseback - walking, in physical contact with the uneven ground, but at a certain height. The mounted traveller sees out over things, while avoiding the mapmaker's commanding overview. In a world of many gates, portals and courts, the horseman rides through Chinese spaces, but he will never presume to be "inside China". He self-consciously rejects Claudel's participation, "co-naissance", knowledge of the East as co-birth. Segalen will not experience and reveal the deep, "inner" truths of China. Mounted and nomadic, he moves sensuously over and around its surfaces.

Segalen finally rejects three common ways in which travellers and ethnographers have imagined other worlds for the purposes of comprehension: the logic of secrecy and penetration; cultural interpretation; and experiential cultural evocation. In *René Leys* he induces the collapse of a conceptual topography which deploys the other as a structure of barriers and thresholds surrounding an ultimate secret, a central truth. *Briques et tuiles* (and *Equipee*) set both observer and observed in motion: China can no longer be conceived as a unified culture or system of symbols, a text to be read by an authoritative interpreter. In *Les Immémoriaux* he experiments with (but later abandons) the project of ethnographically "giving voice" to an alien experience.

René Leys is a subtle meditation on depth-truth, its disclosure, and the endless will to know. The narrator, named Segalen (the novel is loosely based on real events he witnessed in Peking during 1912, the last days of the

Empire) is obsessed with the Forbidden City and with the hidden centre of China, the Emperor. Segalen must know everything possible about "The Within". A young Belgian named René Leys who has grown up in Peking and is a master of languages (and of role-playing) serves as intermediary. The youth passes in and out of the walled compound, revealing to the avid narrator more and more amazing stories of seduction and intrigue. (As Loti seduces Aziyadé, violating the Turkish harem, René Leys is taken as lover by the Dowager Empress.) Segalen and Leys are doubles, sharers of secrets. A too-intimate, diffusely erotic understanding unites them, complicit - we are led to suspect - in the very invention and revelation of the exotic "Within". The tale is told with great skill. If as readers we are made to doubt the existence of any ultimate secret or central truth inside the Palace (which emerges as multifarious and labyrinthine, where no one, especially the Emperor, can know all that happens), we are none the less unable to dismiss everything we hear as mere fantasy. The story has too much historical specificity, following as it does, very closely, the overthrow of the Empire. Moreover, in the novel René Leys is finally killed for his "inside" involvement: it cannot all have been an invention.

Throughout, Segalen maintains a subtle uncertainty as to what, if anything, goes on within the Palace. And we are finally brought to see the seductive, possibly lethal, movement of the narrator's own insatiable desire for disclosure, a structure of knowledge underlying all stories of concealment, penetration or initiation. *René Leys* subverts this logic of secrecy - the positing of an other with a true "within". There are no ultimate depths: the desire for revolutions is endless. What remains is an ethnography of surfaces, of signs without essential content, of the Mallarméan *l'objet*.

Though he knew China well, having passionately studied its languages and history, Segalen portrayed an uncertain reality - multi-form, shifting, always giving way. His collection of travel observations, *Briques et tuiles*, is a sequence of discrete encounters, notes and prose-poems that enact the movement of a traveller through a country that is, to alter Breton's famous phrase, an "érosion fixe". A modernist fascination with ruins (not a world to reconstruct but a positive aesthetic of fragmentation and process) is given brilliant expression. China appears as a jumble of surfaces and crumbling forms, impressive walls and

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The Times Literary Supplement
Paperback £6.95 net

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

doors with nothing behind. Segalen walks – rides – through this country, entranced by the lightness of its wooden structures, the decay accepted and built-in. (And could not a French traveller see the same, today, among California's ruins?) He mocks the Occident, where stone cathedrals are built as if for the ages: "duration has nothing to do with solidity".

Le monument chinois est mobile, et ses hordes de pavillons, ses cavaleries de toits fouguesux, ses poteaux, ses ruses de nuages et ses flammes... ses décors, son bâti, sa structure sont prêts toujours, éternellement prêts au départ... sont nomades... Rendons-lui donc son en allée, sa fuite, son exode, et sa procession éternelle... Oui. Palais immobiles par accident, et contre votre nature: constructions légères... ne pouvant votre nature: le balancement des porteurs de dais... c'est moi qui me rendrai vers vous, et l'ondulation... ma marche dont chacun de vos parvis me sera une étape, vous rendra le rythme des épaules et les oscillations par où l'on vous animalait jadis. Je marcherai vers vous.

Segalen's Chinese landscape is barely stopped motion. Mountains are "frozen waves". He rides with fascination over the "yellow country" of the North ("Image de la Chine?" he wonders), a furrowed, cut land, yellow dust in the wind and water constantly moving; everything erodes. Over the land his road manoeuvres, tacks to skirt each new cave-in or alteration of a stream's course. Segalen writes the modernist experience of displacement: self and other as a sequence of encounters, the stable identity of each at issue. There is no unified culture to be represented, no whole self able to interpret a "China".

Segalen had experimented with other ethnographic tactics. In his first book, *Les Immémoriaux*, he tried realistically to evoke "the native point of view". This is probably his best known, and least characteristic, work. It speaks eloquently on behalf of traditional Polynesia, falling rather too easily into an elegiac lament for the vanishing primitive. The novel's standpoint is that of Térii, a *récitant*, oral performer of genealogies and myths. It begins with a crisis: Térii forgets, falters in the midst of an important recitation. This rupture of oral tradition is tied to the arrival of European ships in Tahiti, the presence of a new, confusing power. The novel follows Térii's disgrace and flight, his travels, his encounters with missionaries; and it ends with a tragic prognosis: the death of "Maori Civilization". *Les Immémoriaux* is a rather successful ethnographic novel, for Segalen was a close observer of the cultural situation in French Polynesia around the turn of the century. Its descriptions of traditional ritual are based on the best scholarship available at the time. In addition, there is a happy correspondence between Segalen's own symbolist fascination for the acoustic, the orphic power of oral expression, the musical Word, and a general Polynesian emphasis on cosmogonic speech.

Et c'est affaire aux promeneurs-de- nuit, aux hâter-po à la mémoire longue, de se livrer, d'autel en autel et de sacrifice à la discipline, les histoires premières et les gestes qui ne doivent pas mourir. Aussi, dès l'ombre venue, les hâter-po se hâtent à leur tâche, de chacune des terrasses divines, de chaque mont bûti sur le cercle du rivage, s'élève dans l'obscur le murmure monotone, qui, mêlé à la voix houleuse du récif, entoure l'île d'une ceinture de prières.

But, if *Les Immémoriaux* successfully touched a romantic chord among its (European) readers, certain of its deepest associations must have been problematic for its author. The doomed tradition of Polynesia is rendered as an intensely honourable world, an environment of spoken and heard intimacies. Such presences were strongly, but ambivalently, attractive to Segalen. One of his short fictions, "Dans un monde sonore", imagines a man who chooses to live in a darkened room, filled with subtle sounds. He touches and apprehends space acoustically; sight seems crude and intrusive. The tale's protagonist is beautifully lrisane. In *René Leys*, the narrator's closest communion with his seductive friend occurs as the two recline in the dark night of a Peking garden, exchanging only sounds. And in *Les Immémoriaux*, the penetration and evocation of a sonorous world is associated with an inevitable death: Segalen did not return to this style of cultural evocation. But his last, fragmentary poems were a series of long-lined odes (*Thibet*: he clung to the aspired spelling), songs of the deferred, desired place, a pure, transcendent echo-chamber.

Segalen's move from Tahiti to China was a shift in emphasis from the oral to the visual and the written. Chinese speech is barely evoked in his writings, but inscriptions – characters, gestures, architecture, paintings – abound. It is no longer a question of Segalen merging his voice with that of the other. As he put it in a letter to Debussy: "Au fond, ce n'est ni l'Europe, ni la Chine que je suis venu chercher ici, mais une vision de la Chine". Segalen's other is a construction of desire, a manifest fiction (like its closest recent analogue, Roland Barthes's *Japan in Empire of Signs*). The multifarious Chinese allegory becomes a source of increasingly personal meanings. For example, Segalen's *Stèles* do not translate a Chinese cultural content, but offer to their author an impersonal, official voice, a disguise, which then permits a degree of emotional, inventive freedom. Segalen was not given to direct expressions of emotion, but his *Peintures* are facets of an intimate imagination – inscribed on silk, porcelain, wool, water, in the air. Some

paintings unroll like long scrolls. In the unsettling look of a woman, in the feel of a tapestry, on the cold surface of a vase, Segalen explores a gallery of personal fascinations and fears.

The sequence of "Chinese" paintings is open-ended, and so is the consciousness that looks, travels through, its exotic *imaginaire*. For as Segalen wrote to a friend, "Le transfert de l'Empire de Chine à l'Empire de soi-même est constant." Reading his later works one begins to suspect why Segalen never finished the long-planned essay on exoticism, "an aesthetic of the diverse". For in his Chinese writing the detours became more and more clearly personal. And by the end of his life it was inescapable that the search for diversity was returning repetitively to himself, to his familiar obsessions. At the conclusion of *René Leys* the death of Segalen's young confidant signifies, among other things, the end of that part of his being that could "pass" within an exotic Forbidden City, that could believe in the possibility of



Victor Segalen

Short walks

Colin Thubron

IAN CAMERON
Mountains of the Gods: The Himalaya and the mountains of central Asia
248pp. Century. £12.95.

If the world has a geographical heart, it is the Himalaya. Together with its arterial ranges – the Karakoram, Hindu Kush, Tien Shan, Kun Lun – the massif covers an area larger than Western Europe, and even from outer space (according to astronauts) "illumines the heart of Asia like a circle of white fire".

Ian Cameron's *Mountains of the Gods* is, astonishingly, the first book to trace the mountains' history from their geological formation and human settlement to the invasion of those eccentric explorers, mountaineers and scientists who eventually scaled and measured every great peak by 1964. It is a handsome book, widely researched, interestingly illustrated and written in a fluent style which occasionally stirs into poetry. But on the whole it is this author's gift to retire behind his history, and the book's chief distinction lies in the unobtrusive organization of material which is almost as mountainous as its subject, and in its graphic telling of other men's stories.

From the first there are surprises. The Himalaya are almost the youngest mountains in the world, formed less than 80 million years ago. The Hindus ascribe their origin to the rape of Mother Earth by a passing demon: Cameron depicts a less personal drama – the old, hard

rock of the drifting Indian continent crashing like a battering-ram into the underbelly of Asia. Even now the resultant Himalaya are rising at the rate of five inches a year (it was a joke among mountaineers that you'd better climb them quick or they'd grow out of range) but in fact the summits are eroding at about the same speed, and the northward push of the central mass is cutting off the rainfall from the Pamirs and reducing them to desert.

Rarely has the relationship between men and a seemingly impregnable Nature been more dramatically reversed than here. A hundred years ago scarcely a peak had been climbed or a tribe tamed. Lhasa was "the forbidden city", the Pamirs "the third pole". But today the tracks around Annapurna are trodden bare by backpacking Germans and Japanese; the Russians are scarifying Afghanistan and drastically changing the course of the Pamir rivers; the Chinese dismantling the monasteries of Tibet; and the faces of native priests and princelings which look out at us from these pages have the austere completeness of icons from another millennium.

Among the variety of information in the book (including appendices on tribal groups and protected areas) the author has sensibly divided the bewildering invasion of men (and women) into explorers, climbers and scientists. Even now, to read their stories is to relive the experience with them, and momentarily to forget that their success mimicked the feat of the Hindu demon and obliterated the last of the earth's virginity.

The earliest invaders had the appearance of

sharing other lives or of shedding a given identity. The novel's ending is infused with a lucid, poignant sadness, a deep sense of loss (Perhaps appropriately, Segalen's own illness, linked to a spiritual crisis, remained obscure. His friend Claudel would urge a conciliation with Catholicism, and his Rumours of suicide persist.)

Segalen's last major work was English (meaning something between "Trek" and "Escapade"). It records his longest arduous logical expedition, just before the First World War, a journey that approached, but did not cross into Tibet. *Equipee* is Segalen's most directly personal work of travel writing. For once, the first person singular prevails. But "je" is far from simple: it moves through the Chinese landscape in two distinct registers. *Equipee* records a permanent struggle, an alternation, between "imaginary" and "real" – "between a summit conquered with metaphor and altitudes arduously gained with the legs... between what one seeks and what is grasped". This is not a matter of illusion versus reality, or of "mental" set against "physical" events. Rather it is a process of desire, the "of" of exoticism in motion, internalized. A never unsatisfied quest for diversity constitutes the intimate body and subjectivity of the traveller. In the mountainous landscapes of the south, so distant from the world around him, Segalen unlearns much of what he knew of China. But he seldom describes the places he meets, as if they could be better distance, pictured in detail. *Equipee* provides instead a subjective rhythm – the desires, shocks, perceptions and feelings of a man moving through a space that is both real, imagined. If at times it is unclear whether "je" is evoked as an external perception or a desire, the narrative still preserves an irreducible concreteness. This quality inheres in its beautifully articulated steps – footfalls on a path, the visible stages (*étapes*) of the journey, each a negotiation. For Segalen, diversity is what has been pre-coded as exotic, "Chinese", but the sensations and desires surprise and seek him out.

In the mountains near Tibet the exhausted traveller finally encounters the *Aure*, a river now with a capital "A" – the end of his "initiation au réel". This Other sends Segalen back on his tracks. Met on the path: a strange, familiar man, blond, fifteen years younger, wandering "ready for anything, ready for any place, ready to live over those possibilities". Victor Segalen starting out for Tibet.

nerability of pygmies in the landscape, whether Indian pilgrims searching out the sources of the holy Ganges a thousand years before Christ, or the Chinese traveller Hsueh Tszang who crossed the Tien Shan out of the glorious curiosity (and wandered for another ten years). Even Alexander the Great, pushing his cavalry to the foot of the Pamirs, or the armies of Tamerlane spilling over the Hindu Kush, leave the mountains themselves untouched.

Such invaders were followed, of course, by a roll-call of brave, dutiful or half-witted nineteenth-century Europeans – Thomas Moore, the first Englishman to enter Lhasa (which he hated); William Moorcroft, who penetrated the western Himalaya and Hindu Kush and died there; the indefatigable explorer Joseph Wolf; Godfrey Vigor, the discoverer of the Karakoram; the prodigious Russian Semenov and Przhevalski; the brilliant, restless Ney Elias; a stream of others.

Then came the climbers. And here Cameron has made good use of Royal Geographical Society archives, going back to W.W. Conway, the author traces the special relationship of the French with Annapurna (first in 1900), of the Germans with Nanga Parbat (1903), of the British with Everest (1953), of the Italians with K2 (1954). Only in this chapter on scientists does he flag before the daunting mass of available material and, sadly, limit himself to two expeditions. But in all, *Mountains of the Gods* is a feat of balance and economy.

The folk hero of County Hall

Ben Pimlott

JOHN CARVEL
Citizen Ken
240pp. Hogarth Press. £8.95 (paperback, £2.95).
0701139293

Is there substance to "municipal socialism"? Is Ken Livingstone the shape of things to come? This excellent short biography of the council leader known to *Sun* readers as "the most odious man in Britain", suggests that town-hall radicalism is a force which legislative magic wands will not easily wave away. Tracing the contours of what has become a remarkable career, the local government correspondent of the *Guardian* presents his subject, not as the mahdi of a new movement, but as a representative – even archetypal – figure within it.

Like many Labour politicians, Livingstone came from the aspirant, house-buying, Tory-voting, upper end of the working class. Though there was show business in the family (his mother was a circus performer), young Kenneth showed little early interest in public display. Eleven-plus failure and alienation in a big comprehensive led him instead into a private world of dumb fauna, from which – he claims – his later view of human organization is derived. It was his first job as a lab technician, taking him across the crucial divide between respectable working and strained lower-middle class, that introduced him to politics. Learning about Wilsonian socialism from work-mates, the nineteen-year-old Livingstone was "trembling with excitement" when Labour won the 1964 election. Four years later, unlike his student contemporaries who were leaving it, he joined the Labour Party.

With Labour in power at Westminster, the party was at its nadir in the constituencies. It was a time of octogenarian general management committees, of local executives that could not raise a quorum. It was also a time when any determined newcomer could have a local council seat for the asking. Within months Livingstone was on the ladder. In 1973, somewhat to his surprise, he found himself a member of the GLC.

John Carvel tries to make something of Livingstone's manoeuvres during the early 1970s in and around Camden and Norwood, and of the training he received from "Red Ted" Knight of Lambeth. In fact, the young councillor's early political experiences were little different from those of dozens of others, picked up in committee or on the doorstep in London's poorer areas, and passed through the filter of Labour bar-room fad and fancy. There was never much in the way of theory. Livingstone's table-talk, extensively quoted in this book, reveals firmly held prejudices – in favour of justice for the underdog and other equally unpopular causes – but apart from Stuart Holland-derived references to the power of capital and some crude social darwinism ("a vision of a hunter-gatherer society with microchips" as Carvel puts it), there is little that comes from book-learning and almost nothing from Marx.

As a politician, Livingstone's success came from not joining left-wing groups. His tactic was to mobilize the left, organize the left, run with the left, yet always to stand somewhat apart and aloof from the left. At first, he was a centrist. In the early 1970s, the real division in local Labour politics was social and generational, not ideological. The battle was between the dinosaur old guard, rooted in communities that had ceased to exist, and better-educated upstarts, filling gaps on councils after Labour's crushing municipal defeats of 1968 and 1969. This injection of youth and ambition began a process of revitalization that was well advanced before most outsiders noticed the decline that had earlier occurred.

What has Livingstone's GLC actually achieved? With central government whittling away local responsibilities at every opportunity the answer in policy terms is not much. "Fares Fair" was effectively crushed. The Council's other most publicized and controversial policy – funding what journalists call "minority groups" – accounts for a tiny percentage of its discretionary budget. Nevertheless, in public relations terms the new régime has been a triumph. Here is an interesting paradox: Soloman has a local authority received such a bad

press; never has a London leader been subject to such calumny. Yet it has been precisely because of Livingstone-induced notoriety that the new gas-and-water socialists have been able to achieve the astonishing feat of making council work appear glamorous. The adage about all publicity being good publicity is particularly apt. Citizen Ken's present status as cockney folk hero, and the government's embarrassment as it tries to destroy him, owe much to the prurient headlines in the *Sun* and *Mail* which have given him his fame. British local government was conceived as a means of defusing opposition by letting local notables take the decisions that did not matter. Livingstone and his colleagues have forced a Cabinet that can treat the parliamentary Opposition with contempt to bring out its biggest guns against resistance in the localities.

Into the valley of death

Hugo Young

MICHAEL FOOT
Another Heart and Other Pulses: The alternative to the Thatcher society
220pp. Collins. £8.95.
0002171569

DAVID BUTLER and DENNIS KAVANAGH
The British General Election of 1983
388pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333345789

MICHAEL CRICK
Militant
242pp. Faber. Paperback, £3.95.
0571132561

The last election was a watershed in British political history. We do not know in quite which direction the flow will now move. The result, with its overwhelming victory for the Conservatives, and the mutually destructive division of votes on the left, could be the prelude to several different situations: to the extinction of Labour as a party of government, to its replacement by a social democratic alternative, to the absorption of the Liberal party in the SDP, or vice versa, to the adoption of proportional representation, to a twenty-year period of coalition government, to the next great Conservative split, c. 1989. Each of these is a credible possibility. Each, if it occurs, will be said to have been set in train by, among other things, the general election of 1983. The books about this election – both Michael Foot's apology and the Butler-Kavanagh contribution (the thirteenth of its kind) to the Nuffield series – will therefore endure, as others about previous elections have not, as essential tools for the long-range political historian.

Michael Foot's book will be particularly useful. It provides compelling evidence of the state of mind in which most of the Labour party fought the election, not excluding evidence about the leader's own role in the catastrophic result. Indeed, it makes this result still easier to comprehend. Designed as an act of self-defence and an explicit piece of revenge against the hostile media which allegedly destroyed Foot's chances, the book is in fact self-destructive. The grounds for a defence simply do not exist. Butler and Kavanagh, in their dry, academic way, conclude that no campaign by any major party had ever been fought with such ineptitude as was Labour's in 1983. They also write of Foot: "It is necessary to go back to Mr Attlee to find a party leader so out of sympathy with the style of modern electioneering." While Foot admits that one or two things might have been better done, especially from a presentational point of view, his book, from its windily uplifting title to its leaden citation of copious extracts from the leader's own campaign speeches, reveals a man uncritically content with his own style.

He offers a few gleanings of interest. Gerald Kaufman, it emerges, asked him to stand down from the leadership even after the election campaign had begun. Denis Healey, lauded throughout as a loyal trouper, is portrayed as a master of pragmatic double-talk. Foot admits this and puts it on open display. A paragraph on page 89 describes with wonderful candour the way the compromise on defence policy was meant to have been stitched up; and the different words Healey and Foot permitted each

There is another paradox. The Livingstone régime has made its name by raising two fingers, not just at Michael Heseltine and Mrs Thatcher, but also at the London electorate. Where previous LCC and GLC leaders worried about the electoral effects of a penny-in-the-pound increase in rates, the new, psephologically informed generation has been aware that only an earthquake can shift municipal voters from their indifference to local issues. Livingstone's relaxed – and in the end, vote-winning – candour has been one consequence. What national politician, greeting reporters after seeing the Transport Secretary, would venture to remark: "He asked to see me again. I think he must want me for my body?"

To be pilloried by the media is to be exalted by the faithful. For Livingstone, the only electorate that really matters is an intra-party

one. That is the real meaning of Labour Party democracy. Part of Livingstone's success has been in turning the GLC into a personal platform. *Per ardua ad astra*. Livingstone is a professional who does his homework, a twenty-four-hour operator living for the thrills and spills of his obsession. He understands the currency of political principle, and unlike the legates of Herbert Morrison, he enjoys smashing eggs. He speaks for a harsher, nastier, more resilient, less deferential and more effective breed of socialist, than existed in the past. John Carvel's readable, intelligent and unillusioned book does not eulogize its subject. It encourages a belief, however, that Livingstonians will be around, fixing meetings, counting heads and making rude noises, when Social Democrats of blessed memory are breaking moulds in the sky.

The tables they publish and the sheer volume of statistical analysis they offer are what make the series an invaluable data-bank. Yet this growing sophistication has not been matched by any absolute proof that any of it really matters. Voting behaviour, which is what elections are about, can now be described in great arithmetical detail. But it is little nearer to being predicted or, with certainty, explained.

As part of their account of Labour's decline, Butler and Kavanagh include a summary of the recent history of the Militant Tendency, whose depredations in Labour constituency parties were a large preoccupation of the party organization at the time when it should have been preparing for the election. Michael Crick has written the first full account of this phenomenon, which is second in importance only to the SDP as a new force shaping the British political structure. It is an admirable book. As a piece of contemporary political reporting, it is as valuable as Padraig O'Malley's recent analysis of Ireland, *The Unceiling Wars*. Both are lucid, detached, hard-working, readable and meticulous reports from difficult territory. Crick takes Militant out of the closet where it would prefer to hide itself, but also out from under the bed where the capitalist press have succeeded simultaneously in over-writing its menace and trivializing its importance.

The conventional wisdom among Labour leaders is that the Tendency is a busted flush. But Crick calculates its membership at 4,700 and rising; its influence to be extended through 20 trade unions; and its annual income to be at least £1 million, all of it from the membership and from the commercial activities of its printing company. Ten years ago it had 500 members, four years before that only 100. With 130 full-time organizers (Labour itself has a staff of only 200) and a computer in the back room, Militant is far from dead. Crick, in fact, predicts that it will increase its present score of two MPs. He gives a telling picture of the Militant life-style, more religious than political, and for the first time flushes out the shadowy eccentrics, notably Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe, who would lead the politburo when the Militant revolution came to pass. The organization continues patiently to manoeuvre for control inside the Labour party, from which only its leaders were expelled. Its uniqueness among the Trotskyite splinter groups is perhaps its devotion to working-class solidarity. It scorns the middle classes, who might otherwise be known as the Labour élite. Taaffe is quoted here as saying of them: "They should be dried in the wind, buried in the snow, fried on the grill, then dried in the wind and buried in the snow again, and then, and only then, we might accept them."

Militant does make a brief appearance in Michael Foot's book. But not in the index. Between the more quintessentially Footian reference-points, Prince Metternich and John Milton, no Militant appears. As a middle-class intellectual, he is quite sure that Labour will be neither tried nor buried, either by Militant or the SDP. Crick presents him and his former colleagues with evidence which, being dispassionately assembled, should make the realists among them, if any such remain, think again.

John Carvel

Riding the rollercoaster

Galen Strawson

OLIVER SACKS
A Leg To Stand On
168pp. Duckworth. £8.95.
07156 16279

A Leg To Stand On is a most interesting book. But it is also a most unfortunate book, and an unworthy sequel to *Awakenings*, Oliver Sacks's remarkable account of the treatment of the victims of sleeping sickness (*encephalitis lethargica*) with a drug called L-DOPA. Professor Sacks is certainly not unaware of the fact that the emotions recorded in *A Leg To Stand On* are in certain respects ludicrous and disproportionate. He speaks of his "ego-charged frenzies", and there are important trace elements of irony in his self-portrayal. But these are quite insufficient to counter the general and debilitating flood of verbal and emotional extravagance.

Introducing the book as a "neurological novel" . . . but one which is rooted in personal experience and neurological fact", Professor Sacks thereby specifies the other main thing that is wrong with it: it lays claim both to the special impact of factual truth and to the special licence of fiction. These two things work against each other, however. One's general disposition to treat the whole thing as true renders the element of fabrication extremely tiresome; while the fact that the story is fictionally boosted undermines one's confidence in its accuracy, and thereby seriously weakens its impact as a drama of real life. The fiction undercuts the claim to truth; the claim to truth causes one to lose patience with the fiction. This is not to say that truth and fiction can never be mixed, only that Sacks has not done it well. In the end one is not quite sure one can believe anything he says, either here or elsewhere - his highly polished case histories of strange neurological disorders bear all the same marks of dramatic enhancement.

A Leg To Stand On opens with Sacks bounding self-congratulatory up a Norwegian mountain in a blitting mist. Rounding a boulder, he comes upon a massive, milk-white bull. It turns to look at him, and he takes this very badly:

The huge white face seemed to swell and swell, and the great bulbous eyes became radiant with malignance. The face grew huger and huger all the time, until I thought it would blot out the Universe. The bull became hideous - hideous beyond belief, hideous in strength, malevolence and cunning. It seemed now to be stamped with the infernal in every feature. It became, first a monster, and now the Devil.

What follows? His fear, his flight, his fall; a severe injury to the left leg - "the entire quadriceps [muscle] ripped from the patella" or knee cap; a struggle down the mountain in a great flurry of allusion to God, Tolstoy, Ecclesiastes, Death, Kant, Goethe, Nietzsche, Pavlov, Harvey, Mozart, Leibniz, Joshua and Auden; rescue, hospitalization in London, surgery, convalescence, physiotherapy and final return to health.

Sacks's main subject, however, is the complete loss of all feeling and motor control in his leg for over two weeks after his operation. "I knew not my leg . . . It was absolutely not me . . . I had lost my leg". He experiences for himself something he has previously encountered only in books and in his patients - a sense of radical alienation and emotional dissociation from his own leg, a feeling that it is repellent in so far as it is still there, combined with a strong sense that it is not really there at all.

Intellectually he knows it is still there. Extroceptive sense confirms its lumpy presence: he can see it and touch it. But interoceptive (or proprioceptive) sense draws a most alarming blank - no leg, no leg at all. He lacks any kinaesthetic awareness of the leg as something that moves and is movable at will: he is no longer in touch with it *via* that precise, fully automatic, internal "somatognostic" awareness which we ordinarily have of the position of our limbs, and which seems to be so intimately bound up with our entirely unreflective ability to move them at will that, very often, to lose the one is *eo ipso* to lose the other.

This awareness is something that we take so much for granted that we don't really notice it until we lose it. But when we lose it, even partially, we are utterly confounded. It appears from Sacks's experiences that one's sense of the reality of one's body is so deeply founded on one's internally mediated awareness of it that loss of this awareness overrides all the reassurances of sight, touch and intellect in the most remarkable and emotionally disturbing way. One of Sacks's patients apparently woke in the night to find what he took to be a severed human leg in his bed. A hospital prank in the poorest taste - he threw it out of the bed. And went with it, for it was in fact his own. He found this extremely hard to believe:

Have you ever seen such a creepy, horrible thing? I thought a cadaver was just dead. But this is uncanny! And somehow - it's ghastly - it seems stuck to me! . . . this leg, this thing, doesn't feel right, doesn't feel real - and it doesn't look part of me.

Something of the same existentially unnerving sort happens to Sacks; "neuro-ontological extinction" of the leg, and a corresponding dent in the self. One of the most surprising things about Sacks's loss of control is that it is not caused by any injury to the brain - by some right hemisphere dysfunction, some damage to the somatosensory cortex - but by a peripheral injury. It is injury to the leg itself which causes it to be erased from the body-image in such a dramatic fashion.

As the nerves heal, Sacks's will re-extends itself into his leg. Slowly he learns to walk again, despite some startling hallucinations in which his leg, wildly telescoping and concertina-ing, is "now . . . a thousand feet long, now a matter of two millimetres . . . now . . . fat, now . . . thin . . . now . . . tilted this way, now . . . that". He rediscovers what A.R. Luria called the "kinetic melody" of his leg. Rapturously convalescent, he learns from other patients that symptoms like his own are not uncommon, but that hospital doctors, strong on physiology, anatomy and aetiology, short on sympathy, time and imagination, pay them little heed.

He calls for change: just as classical psychology gave way to neuropsychology, so neuropsychology must give way to a new "clinical ontology", a new existential "neurology of self, of identity". More work on the phenomenology of illness and hospitalization is needed. A Hippocratic hermeneutics is required. All of which is fine, but not so very new. It is hard to believe that current experts in the field of injuries like Sacks's are as ignorant as he supposes of the way things feel after one's nerves have been severed. Sacks finds his own inspiration, his medico-metaphysical organon, in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, but his account of how the *Critique* solved his (Humean) problem about the nature of the self is unintelligible to me; and space and time are most decidedly not the "constructs . . . of reason", in Kant's book.

The doctors - those unfeeling, banalistic mechanicals - record an "Uneventful Recovery" for Sacks. "What damned utter nonsense!" says Sacks. And indeed he lives the whole episode with a gaudy intensity that borders continually on the hysterical, soaring and plummeting on the Brobdingnagian rollercoaster of his emotions. Part of this is unsurprising. Alone on a misty mountain, one is an easy prey for unreasonable fears. Hospitalized with an illness of uncertain outcome, one is naturally subject to violent fluctuations of mood. But Sacks outfluctuates us all, swooping from sudden terror to infinite relief, from total panic to uttermost peace - on every page there are rapid-fire epiphanies, surprise, wonder.

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After Peter Sutcliffe had been jailed in 1981 for thirty years for murdering thirteen women and attempting to murder a further seven, Gordon Burn took himself off to Sutcliffe's home town of Bingley for a couple of years to live among his family, neighbours and friends. It cannot have been much fun. Sutcliffe's family emerge as as shiftless and charmless a family as you could hope to spend two years with. His father was hated even by his own children for his bullying, his bragging, his infidelities, his small-time thieving and his sadistic treatment of their mother. Sutcliffe's brother Mick was another small-time thief; in and out of jails, women and drunkenness. His other brother, Carl, was in and out of approved schools and eventually escaped from his close relatives by going to live rough in the middle of a forest.

Burn has let none of this put him off. He has evidently spent hours beyond number with them, leeching their memories for any detail, date or reminiscence, no matter how trivial. The family obviously responded generously and, as far as one can judge, frankly. The general tone of the book - and the family - is well conveyed by an episode quite early on concerning Sutcliffe's father John, who, in addition to boasting to his own sons about the other women he slept with, appears to have regularly groped at his sons' girlfriends and wives. When, by accident, he thought he had discovered his wife was having an affair with a neighbour, he impersonated the alleged lover over the phone and suggested a nocturnal meeting at a nearby hotel. Mr Sutcliffe was there to meet his wife at the appointed hour with a reception committee of three other, hitherto innocent, members of the family.

You don't need a brass plate on your front door to gauge the effect such a family would have on a shy, skinny and physically weak young boy - for this was how Peter was thought of, at least by his father and brothers. When he escaped as a teenager it was to a job digging graves. His first (and only) steady girlfriend - later his wife - was, on some accounts at least, a prudish snob shrewishly obsessed by housework; and herself a schizophrenic. At the beginning of an attack lasting four years she thought she was the second Christ and that Peter Sutcliffe was an angel.

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The moral obscurity and darkness was filled, as the physical darkness, the shadow . . . Now, lay open before me into the land of light and Now, unimpeded, I would run this good road, and swifter, into a fulness and sweetness of life, as I had forgotten, or never known. My spirit has been rising since that wonder-walk on Wednesday and now, on Saturday, I was flying with joy - which was to last, and deepen, for six weeks, transformed and transfigured the world, and made everything a new wonder and festivity.

Sacks has a great many interesting things to record. It is a pity that he has chosen to do this way. He is an inventive and subtle stylist, and in his sober moments he produces powerful vocabulary and quickly associated intelligence to very good use. His interests invite a comparison with W.G. Sebald. But he suffers badly in the comparison. On page after page of Sacks's gushing, incoherent words, one looks in vain for some wit, decorum and brilliant lightness. James brought to his most routine writing, in 1887 paper on "Consciousness of Lost Laid" for example.

already, at the very least, come beyond the tabloid puzzler popularly posed at the time: the trial: "How could a bloke from a poor normal background . . . ?" It is clear from the book that Peter Sutcliffe's background was no means normal, even by the bear, date, tart and Where's-my-supper standard of working-class Bingley life. But it says nothing for those standards that Sutcliffe's more bizarre tastes and obsessions were off as mild eccentricities by family and friends and that on the two occasions when someone close to him did suspect him of being the per they were not taken seriously, even by police.

Some of these bizarre tastes have been rehearsed in large headlines and photos. Burn has merely fleshed out in more detail lurid exploits of the grave-digging gang to which Sutcliffe was an enthusiastic member and of his countless trips around the red light districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire. It is familiar to me was his almost equally passionate obsession for the exhibits in the "Madame Torsor Room" of a seaside waxworks museum in Morecambe. Time after time he would turn to stare at the work of a Victorian taxidermist who had preserved the rotten and putrefying genital organs of men and women grotesquely eaten away by pox, capitalising on improving religious mottoes: "Vice is a monster of so hideous a mien/That to be feared Needs but to be seen." And yet, knowing all this, still nothing prepares one for the number of themselves, often committed after running someone home after a good night out. Peter had thrown some potatoes into the oven before they arrived. He hadn't given them enough, however, and when Jane tried to peel them in hers it was "hard as nails". Then Peter attempted to peel the potatoes on his own plate and it slid off the floor. What followed was two hours in which he thought she had never laughed so much in his life. . . . (afterwards) he pressed on through the streets of Bradford and out onto the Manchester Road less than an hour he was ripping the clothes off the body of the woman he had murdered eight days before.

Burn's book - much of it through the eyes and in the dialect, of those most intimately involved - has amply justified the effort involved in it. By the end I felt just slightly closer to understanding the man and his areas than I had having sat through every day of the trial, watched banks of psychiatrists dancing on pin-head as they sought to pin Sutcliffe down to a seventeenth subdivision of paranoid schizophrenia. But then nothing, ultimately, can prepare you for the behaviour of a man who was up from his family supper-table to rip open the stomach of a rotting corpse.

A good night out
Alan Rusbridger
GORDON BURN
"Somebody's husband, somebody's son": The story of Peter Sutcliffe
350pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
034098272

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Wooden-headedness

Lawrence Freedman

BARBARA W. TUCHMAN
The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam
427pp. Michael Joseph. £14.95.
07181 24324

Calls for public enquiries have become a regular feature of British political life. Why was the Argentine invasion of the Falklands not anticipated? Why was the Belgrano sunk? Why were the Americans allowed to invade Grenada? Why was there no early response to the clear abuse of diplomatic privilege by the Libyans? In each case the charge is that the government had both the information and the alternative options available to have averted an unfortunate and in some cases disastrous outcome. In each case the government argues that given what was known at the time and the variety of factors to be taken into account its actions were perfectly reasonable and that its critics are working, as was said of Denis Healey during the recent Parliamentary debate on the Libyan Embassy siege, with the benefit of "unscrupulous hindsight".

If there had been any Trojans left after the Greeks had finished with them a Franks-style report would no doubt have exonerated Priam on the basis that apparently reliable intelligence sources had indicated that the enemy had departed, leaving only a wooden horse as an offering to the gods for a safe journey home (known to be in keeping with Greek traditions . . .), that while it was true that the unfortunate Laocoon did warn against taking the horse inside the city walls, the fact that he was crushed to death with his two sons by two black serpents had been generally taken - and not just by the government - to detract from his credibility, and that Miss Cassandra's reputation for accuracy was not sufficient for her warnings to be taken at all seriously (though your committee must acknowledge that her past record for forecasting was somewhat better than was recognized at the time . . .). It would probably have concluded that the Trojans were the victims of the malevolent whims of the gods, who played out their own quarrels by intervening in human affairs. (We have been unable to question key witnesses because of our lack of a power of subpoena over Olympus . . .).

Homeric recognized that it was not good enough to assume that the gods were responsible for all human sufferings. He has Zeus complaining early in the *Odyssey* that men blame the gods for their troubles when the fault lies in the "blindness of their own hearts". Barbara Tuchman has no patience for any attempt to excuse this classic example of human folly by divine trickery. The Trojans always had the option of destroying the horse but they chose instead to take it within their walls.

Folly is the common thread which ties together what are essentially four quite separate monographs: on Troy; on the provocation of the Protestant Secession by the Renaissance Popes; on the British loss of the American colonies; and on the American failure in Vietnam. The theme is reinforced by an extremely enjoyable introductory chapter in which folly by government is defined as "a perverse persistence in a policy demonstrably unworkable or counter-productive". Mrs Tuchman provides some choice examples: King Rehoboam of Israel who managed to lose the ten northern tribes by insisting on a heavy yoke of labour; the Aztec Emperor Montezuma who failed to stop the Spanish conquistadors when he had the opportunity; the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV which resumed the persecution of the Huguenots and their eventual emigration, causing enormous economic damage; Admiral Yamamoto's advocacy of an attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. Others are mentioned and the potential list is almost infinite. Folly was and is ubiquitous.

That is precisely why it is extremely difficult to generalize on the subject. As an excuse for a scholarly romp through some of history's most

choice instances of misgovernment it is fine. Tuchman may not be a historian's historian but she is a pleasure for the layman to read. Writing history as a series of indictments allows for some vivid portrayals of the culprits and for an unforgiving commentary. The scandalous conduct of the Renaissance popes brings out the best in the author. Moreover, as she ranges over the whole of human history any critic may feel obliged to concentrate on just one section of the book.

Where criticism may be offered with more confidence is of Tuchman's rather weak attempt to develop a general theory of folly. The four main case-studies are not really comparable. There was less at stake for Britain in America and the United States in Vietnam than there was for Troy and the Papacy; the inept prosecution of unnecessary foreign wars is different from a refusal to institute reform or a single catastrophic tactical decision. Only the British loss of the American colonies and the American failure in Vietnam are really comparable (as was pointed out often enough during the Vietnam war). It is also questionable just how much those involved were in control of events. The Renaissance popes' behaviour was, Tuchman writes, "shaped to an unusual degree by the mores and conditions of their time and surroundings". Even if their conduct had been a bit less gross and a bit more spiritual would they have been that distinguishable from the other Italian princes? And even if there had been a move away from the corruption and cynicism exemplified by the sale of indulgences, were there not other economic and political factors at work that would have made some sort of schism in the Church inevitable? Because of her focus on culpable actions there is an inevitable supposition that those concerned were masters of their own fate rather than merely playing their parts in some grand historical tragedy with a multitude of causes.

On the other hand, is it the case that the British and American policy objectives were so

unobtainable? On Vietnam, for example, where Tuchman's narrative is rushed towards the end, there is a presumption throughout that in the end the Communists would take over in the South, so the folly lay in staking American prestige as well as blood and money in an effort to prevent this. The presumption may well be warranted but it is not supported by an analysis of the political and military tactics employed on the ground. It is at least arguable that more subtle and sensitive tactics could have defeated the North and the Vietnam. Is incompetence in implementation of a policy that might in principle have worked equivalent to the choice of a fundamentally bad policy in the first place? These questions do not seriously impair the reader's satisfaction while being guided through these sorry episodes but they reduce the expectation that anything very profound will emerge at the end.

Mrs Tuchman sees "wooden-headedness" - assessing a situation in terms of preconceived fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs - as a constant feature. But this, along with other failings, such as pride, greed and stubbornness, is inherent in individuals, so why should we expect governments to escape them? The reason, says Tuchman, is "that folly in government has more impact on more people than individual follies, and therefore governments have a greater duty to act according to reason". A greater duty perhaps, but how can we structure government to ensure a marriage, of the sort that Plato had in mind, between "political power and intellectual wisdom"? Some rather inconclusive musings in the final chapter provide few grounds for optimism that such a marriage can be achieved. For the future, as in the past, the best we can hope for is to "muddle on . . . through patches of brilliance and decline, great endeavour and shadow".

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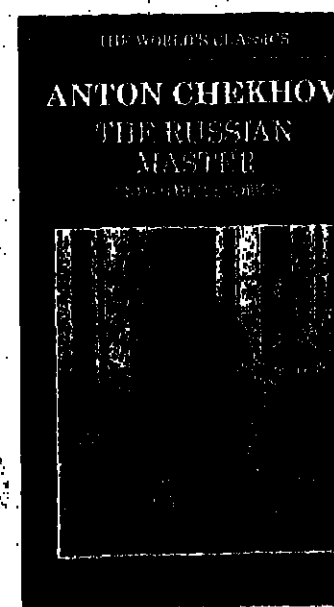
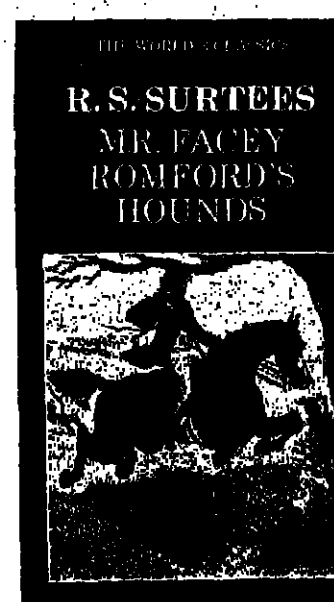
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The "him" of the title story in Saul Bellow's new collection is given to fits of demonic possession during which he fires off offensive wisecracks. This does him no good at all; his dear (and now dead) wife couldn't offer to babysit for all of his victims. Many of them no doubt deserved what they got. Professor Schulze, "one of those bragging polymath types who gave everybody a pain in the ass", worries that no one is learned enough to write an appropriate obituary when he dies. "I'd be happy to do the job, if that would be of any comfort to him", remarks Shawmut in the presence of the Professor's wife. And when the prodigiously rich widow Mrs Pergamon, a benefactor of the arts, mentions that she plans to write her memoirs, he asks, "Will you use a typewriter or an adding machine?" Also, he has been on the receiving end himself. When he reads a conference paper to Kippenberg (who had said of Wagner: "If a de beaux moments mais de mauvais quarts d'heure"), the eminent musicologist begins to nod off. "I'm afraid I'm putting you to sleep, Professor." The answer comes: "No, no, no, on the contrary, you're keeping me awake."

Now, in deep trouble and about to be extradited from British Columbia, Shawmut is writing to someone whom he hurt thirty-five years ago, cruelly and without a jot of justification, in the spirit of art for art's sake. Carla Rose was then a university librarian, a pale, even greenish woman with thin arms, unpretty and undesired. Meeting him with a baseball cap on, she had observed that he looked like an archaeologist, and before he could stop himself, he replied: "And you look like something I dug up." Such witticisms spread like wildfire, especially on a campus; no use to add, enigmatically, that the Venus de Milo was dug up too.

When Shawmut, a music historian of note whose *Introduction to Music Appreciation* has been adopted by a hundred colleges, unwisely goes into business, he is betrayed by his partner, his brother, and then by his lawyer, his brother-in-law, both of whom his tongue has offended. How can such a clever fellow be so easily cheated? Well, he had read about venereal disease and never caught it – and he had read about swindling relatives in Balzac, so... Now he seeks to make amends to Miss Rose, in an apology which embraces his life, while awaiting the federal marshal. "I see that you have returned me good for the evil I did you. I opened my mouth to make a coarse joke at your expense and thirty-five years later the result is a communion."

Bellow commonly drops names to good effect, but something of a mystery here is the excursion to Allen Ginsberg, an object of admiration to Shawmut as one who really succeeded. Why, he's actually a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, despite (or because of) his sedulous libelling of the Establishment – which makes him closer than Shawmut to the American mainstream. "America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel", said that thorough-going foot-in-mouthier. Whether Bellow himself has his tongue in his cheek is impossible to tell.

In "What Kind of Day Did You Have?", the other major story among these five, Katrina has met people like John Cage, Bucky Fuller and Jackie Onassis – but (she is a modest person) only through her ageing lover, Victor Wulpiy, the "Thinker Prince", who is famous for such essays as "Paul Valéry and the Complete Mind". Wulpiy, who isn't at all the cuddly toy his name suggests, was most annoyed when Bernard Berenson, once referred to him as a

considerable person in the bohemian life of New York: "I said that to call me a bohemian was like describing John the Baptist as a hydrotherapist." As we well know, Bellow is fascinated by the life of the mind, and quite a few readers will share Katrina's sense of inadequacy in the face of all the "various views on the crises in economics, cold war, metaphysics, sexaphysics". But they may not share Katrina's devoted admiration for Wulpiy. He must be one of Hegel's World Historical Individuals – "the whole universe was his field of operations" – and to get so much history in, Bellow has to make his characters polymathic, not to say monstrously clever. (Even Katrina has disloyal misgivings when Wulpiy presents her with a copy of Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night*: "you ask your ladylove to read a book to discredit love. . . . That's some valentine.")

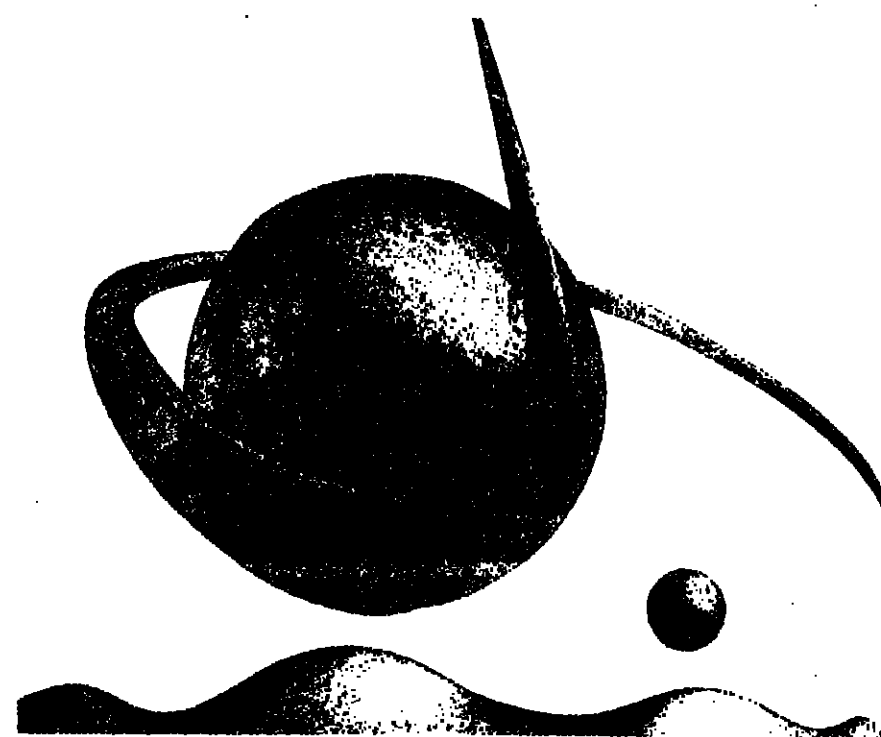
A putative fan of Wulpiy's comes from California to Buffalo to pay homage to the great man, or else (as Wulpiy believes) to insult him. Wrangel, as he is Dickensianly named, makes science fiction films, "a big-time illusionist", and is apparently meant to be a fake, though by normal standards he seems pretty bright. (He lets drop that his teacher at NYU was Sidney Hook.) On a second appearance, however, Wrangel puts up a better show, and even turns out to be likeable and helpful. Bellow loves the cut and thrust of argument, sheer intellectuality and articulateness, whether genuine or phoney. Manifold liveliness, if not all, is a lot.

As ever, the shared idiom is meaty enough to make all this the more palatable, to give it "reality": as when Wulpiy complains that "Thousands of people zero in on me. They come to clean up their act, or make a bid to come to live by", or Katrina's sister observes that an eccentric policeman is "three-quarters off the screen". (Of the comment in *Herzog* on Madeleine's homosexual friends: "She's got more faggots at her feet than Joan of Arc.") But the true hero of the story, with her "swelling bottom line" and "crème de Chantilly inner thighs", is Katrina, who is set to lose her children to her estranged husband and her lover to death. Somewhat similarly, in "Zeitland: By a Character Witness", a rather slight anecdote left over from *Humboldt's Gift*, the young Zeitland – "in short pants, he was a junior Immanuel Kant" – promises or threatens to play the all-purpose genius. He even marries the "Ewig-Weibliche" in the form of Lottie, though it's hard to see how he can possibly be raised much higher. What just about saves the piece from going over the top is the picture of Lottie smearing her ample breasts with honey as a peace offering after their first quarrel.

Herzog, we recall, might think himself a moralist but the shape of a woman's breasts mattered greatly.

The corny wisecrack (a "suicide blonde": dyed by her own hand) is thrown off by Bellow in full flow with as much zest as the recondite allusion; the "fast and foxy" fascinate him as much as those who "long for the best that ever was". In the course of "Cousins", a meandering tale of family obligations, the narrator catches himself up for ("as usual") giving more information than his questioner could have any use for: he took every opportunity to "transmit my sense of life", and "such a habit can be irritating". His ex-wife (there are more ex-wives in Bellow's books than wives, even than mistresses) reckons he is an "exuberance-hoarder". There may be a hint of amused self-criticism here: Bellow's weakness is an excess of *richesse*; he is almost as interested in health as in sickness, thus outdoing Thomas Mann; when sick, his people vomit, and when well, they gorge; so much felt life can be suffocating, a crushing weight on the punier reader's chest. Exuberance is part and parcel of what Daniel Fuchs in *Saul Bellow: Vision and Revision* calls the reaction against "wasteland platitudes" and (in Herzog's words) "the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation". Bellow is the anti-modernist we needed – he didn't win the Nobel Prize for nothing – but it is still possible to over-mature the soil.

It is a measure of his intelligence – helped no doubt by man's unremitting concern to waste the land that God gave – that Bellow hasn't yet established his own platitudes. "In Bellow we may have trouble locating good and evil", Fuchs writes, "but we are never beyond it." We



"The Planet" by Alexander Calder, 1933; to be included in a sale of Impressionist and Modern Watercolours and Drawings at Christies, 8 King Street, London SW1, on Tuesday June 26. The drawings may be compared to similar works of 1931-32; Alexander Calder wrote of the series, "These are some drawings I made right after I visited Mondrian's studio. They are among the first abstract things that I did and they led to the wire universes and possibly, later, to some of the bronze sculptures I did in the 1940s like The Snake on the Arch." Also in the sale are works by Ensor, Jann Gris, Pissarro, Steinlen, Corot, Mallot, Vlaminck, Utrillo, Matisse, Signac, Grosz, Nolde, Kirchner, Picasso, Man Ray, Dall, Cocteau and Magritte.

can be forgiven for sometimes feeling that we are just on the wrong side of the boundary. Pronouncements among his persons range from "In a sense, everything is good because it exists. Or, good or not good, it exists, it is ineffable, and, for that reason, marvellous" (*Dangling Man*) to Herzog's agonized inner cry at the trial of a young couple who have murdered a three-year-old child: "the monstrousness of life. . . . Lying down to copulate, and standing up to kill." The latter might be taken as that famous full look at the worst. As Herzog noted earlier in the novel, we are all survivors, and theories of progress ill befit people who are intimately acquainted with the costs.

Bellow's material includes much of the "wasteland" paraphernalia: perverted sex, violence, greed, corruption, madness, despair. And Herzog's self-exhortation, "Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead", is of limited, indeed domestic, application. That failures in Bellow do tend to sound like pieces of human capital badly invested is fair enough. But even the Mafia has its Great Characters. In the hands of novelists the meek rarely feature as great characters, yet must it be the case – in Chicago? New York? Everywhere? – that they shall inherit only the hearse? There is something scary about this larger-than-life, this unbridled vitality, something Nietzschean, even though we don't take too seriously the comical talk of a principled quest ("principled, mind you") for life-giving pleasure – a programme expounded by Herzog in Sono's parlour, in a wholesomely erotic context.

At all events we are relieved to hear Herzog, despite his great admiration for him, reminding Nietzsche that since all philosophies are perverted soon after adoption, any philosopher should pervert his own system in advance; to see how it will then look. Yes, the visions of genius become the canned goods of the intellectuals. The true lover of life is not too picky; according to *Henderson the Rain King*, if he can't reach as high as his face, he plants his kiss somewhere lower down. The instinctual, we suppose, cannot be worse than the ideological. So we are left with *elan vital*, "intensity" and "idiot joy", a degree of natural goodness, and a mysterious and utterly unapologetic intuition that something better may yet come of us. Even a little of that is a lot for any novelist to put up for adoption.

Obviously Bellow is a gift for critics and researchers. Judie Newman's *Saul Bellow and History* is an unreconstructed doctoral thesis, and one of her pages is spattered with twenty-eight note indicators. Do we want to know the exact location in some Proceedings of some one's cotenation that in trying to discover the

universal in the particular Bellow "echoes Transcendentalist quest"? Dr Newman's pose is to correct the "critical consensus" – "overwhelmingly" presents Bellow "as more concerned with the universal than the particular, with the timeless than the historical". But isn't this breaking us all Sally on a wheel? To argue about the questions of existentialism and transcendence in Bellow is like analysing the ingredients of a cocktail – a tedious task unless you intend to steal the recipe, nothing like as much as drinking it. In any case, the existential "chic" word, said Citrine in a fragment out of *Humboldt's Gift* and the transcendentalist, the specific and the universal, are still twins that no sane writer would want to separate. If anything, there is more specificity in Bellow than one can find in universalist theories. He is insufficient goals ("I want, I want") but Goethean onward-striders.

Judie Newman has something to say, one wishes she had chosen a less cumbersome way of saying it. Equally well informed, Daniel Fuchs is more elaborate, allusive and elegant. While his nominal concern – the revisions, enlargements and discarding doesn't strike me as as brilliantly illuminating as Fuchs has a plithy style and offers no real desirable examination questions to be followed by the instruction, "Discuss". For instance, Bellow is a novelist of intellect, he is not an intellectual novelist or "A moderate everything", Bellow wants to explore everything, extreme Romantic or Modern, Mallarmé or permit anything. Unlike Dr Newman, Bellow, he is often funny. In discussing Herzog's polemic against the "absurd", he comments: "How the cult of nausea derived from the country of haute cuisine remains a mystery we will leave to future historians of the collapse of civilization to unravel." Fuchs rather undervalues *The Dean's December* – Judie Newman stops short of it – and in particular of "Bucharest ladies", whom he finds too much "too frail an embodiment of tradition to count for very much". In that setting any guard resistance – "tradition" hardly seems the right word – is worth a welcome. But as a right word – is worth a welcome. But as a subject, lies in over-explicating and over-proving.

Both of these studies are a patchwork of titbits, potent quotes and neat conclusions adumbrating a greater Great Novel than any merely human author could possibly have written. To put it less grandly, if you know Bellow, they will remind you of him. In the end they bring to mind Sammler's old joke: "What was so I learn about a horse if I know that the horse is called 'equus'?"

Voyages in Meta-land

Marilyn Butler

PERCY G. ADAMS
Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel
 368pp. University of Kentucky Press. £25.50.
 08131 14962

Books of travel are as old and as widely dispersed as written culture. An Egyptian priest of the twelfth century bc left a description of a business trip in the Mediterranean. For priority he easily trumps Herodotus, of the fifth century bc, who has been called the first travel writer, and Xenophon, who tells in the *Anabasis* how, after defeating Cyrus at Cunoxa, he led 10,000 mercenaries northward to the Black Sea. The scholarly Buddhist, Hsüan-Tsang, left his home in China in AD 629, and kept a journal of his sixteen years' wanderings among the libraries of Himalayan monasteries. Roman soldiers stationed in Egypt sent letters home to mother; Crusaders reported back from the Holy Land. Traders like Marco Polo and missionaries like Carpini and Odoric described the wonders of the great Khan empire in India and China. Meanwhile the Arabian traveller Ibn Batuta (c 1324-54) was exploring his own country, Asia Minor, the East Coast of Africa, and Spain. All this before European sailors opened up the New World, and the invention of the printed book opened up the market for reading about it. The great spate of travel books from the sixteenth century on fed an essential human curiosity about other places, and an essential human sympathy with those adventuring into them.

Given the range of works available to him, Percy G. Adams's decision to concentrate on European *réels de voyage* published before 1800 seems almost abstinent. He prefaces his majestic second chapter, "Travel Literature before 1800 – Its History, Its Types, Its Influence" with an epigraph from Lévi-Strauss, which salutes "that crucial moment in modern thought when, thanks to the great voyages of discovery, a human community which had believed itself to be complete and in its final form suddenly learned... that it was not alone, that it was part of a greater whole, and that, in order to achieve self-knowledge, it must first of all contemplate its unrecognisable image in this mirror". That is misleading if it suggests that Adams' book covers all that travel did to Western consciousness, right if it hints that he emphasizes journeys to the New or what is now the Third World, rather than peregrinations within the traveller's home country, or elsewhere in Europe.

Even with this element of selection and specialization, the vastness of the project will impress or depress you, depending on your temperament. For Adams organizes pre-1800 travel books in the various European languages into categories, most importantly by the profession of the traveller – merchant, pirate, missionary, pilgrim, soldier, doctor, cartographer, researcher-for-a-travel-book – an operation which indicates that even if he has not read every work he describes, he has held the majority in his hand. It is a striking feat, then, that Jesuit "Relations" from Canada alone – and the Jesuits travelled, preached and were martyred worldwide between 1540 and 1773 – filled seventy-three large volumes in the standard English edition by R. G. Thwaites (1896-1901). This is one of those books that will be read as a survey, and go on being consulted, perhaps for generations, as a work of reference; it will elicit, and deserve, high praise among fellow-professionals, in Comparative Literature as well as English Literature, for the quantity and quality of its information.

Adams means to go far beyond simply indicating what is there – he means to describe an important literary genre, that continues in English in the work of, say, V. S. Naipaul and Jonathan Raban; whom he mentions, and Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, whom he doesn't. Perhaps his first important objective is simply to convey how successful travel books were, what vast numbers were printed, and how widely, indeed internationally, the most popular ones were read. By the eighteenth century the market for them was so large that several voyagers for a ship's plying to interesting parts might keep notes or jour-

nals, to sell when they got back; the Admiralty gave orders to confiscate those kept in Navy ships, so that one authorized account could be given instead, but with uneven success. The flood of travel-memoirs in England was such that the British complacently thought of themselves as the world's great travellers, but they seem to have been wrong. After the Italians, Portuguese and Spanish of the Renaissance, and their Catholic missionaries, who were as yet keener proselytizers than the Protestants, came waves of Northern Europeans, with Germans increasingly salient. Impecunious German aristocrats specialized in the eighteenth century in turning themselves into professional travellers – adventurers who set out in search of copy, and shrewdly appreciated that there is no publicity like personal publicity.

There are the cousins von der Trenck, both barons, who lived all over Europe not just by their giant strength, their swords, and their love making but by their obvious intelligence and quick thinking; or that other baron, von Pöllnitz, self-styled "cavalier of wit and distinction" and "adventurer of the first rank, a regular Proteus: courier, gambler, author, scandal-monger, Protestant, Catholic, canon, and what not," who changed his religion six times and was a confidant of two kings, a soldier in three armies, and a political spy; or, better still, Rudolph Erich Raspe, another universal genius, a "scholar, linguist, scientist, mining engineer, poet, librarian, coin expert, editor, and hoaxer," who fled to England after robbing his patron the Landgrave of Hesse, became a friend of Horace Walpole and other notables, explored Captain Cook to take him on the third voyage, and died in Ireland after failing to convince a rich landowner that there was gold on his property. Nearly all these adventures... wrote travel accounts of some kind, the exceptions being Gramont, whose *Mémoires* are by his brother-in-law Anthony Hamilton; Psalmanazar, who wrote a fake history of Formosa as if he had been there; and Raspe, who wrote not of himself but of Baron Munchausen, a satirical composite of such real travellers as Abyssinian James Bruce and the Baron de Tott.

The Byron of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*, who is sometimes said to be writing in the tradition of the eighteenth-century novelists, doesn't evoke Roderick Random and Tom Jones so much as the barons von der Trenck.

In fact, as Adams shows, travel literature was so plentiful and popular that sometimes in the eighteenth century it was thought to be outdoing its rival, the novel. One of the earliest lamentations about the imminent death of that form, by Mary Davys in 1727, suggests that novels are going out of "use and fashion", because ladies are reading history and travels instead. Adams, an advocate of his form, wants to show the modern reader that seventeenth and eighteenth-century readers were right; above all, right to find travel literature as exciting and imaginative as the novel, which in any case at that time was often a travel memoir only a little more fictionalized. Before definitions of what makes a novel came in during the nineteenth century, arbitrarily excluding the *réel de voyage*, both these prose genres looked alike as examples of a very ancient artistic kind – the adventures of a hero going on a journey. So the second objective of Adams's book is to reincorporate travel-writing in a more inclusive genre, by showing how formal concepts now used solely in novel-criticism in fact do for both. He discusses travels in chapters called "Structure: the Hero and his Journey", "Structure: the Narrator" and "Structure: Action, Character, but especially Theme". Even the character-types encountered in supposedly real-life travels – the mentor, the comic servant, the seduced and forsaken native girl – turn out to resemble figures familiar in eighteenth-century fiction. The exercise brings Adams to a firm conclusion, "prose fiction and the travel account have evolved together, are heavily indebted to each other, and are often similar in both content and technique".

It's a pity that Adams planned his book as a sustained comparison between the travel-memoir and the novel, because this has narrowed and in the end deadened his writing on travels, where his expertise is unrivalled. But his plain what induced him to do it – the contingencies of the teaching of literature in university departments. Only a small proportion of what was written before 1800, and survives, is being taught in literature courses, and the selection of that proportion hasn't always been determined by the aesthetic quality or interest of the books. It's time for a re-evaluation of the travel account, and Adams's book is a first step towards that. It's a pity that Adams planned his book as a sustained comparison between the travel-memoir and the novel, because this has narrowed and in the end deadened his writing on travels, where his expertise is unrivalled. But his plain what induced him to do it – the contingencies of the teaching of literature in university departments. Only a small proportion of what was written before 1800, and survives, is being taught in literature courses, and the selection of that proportion hasn't always been determined by the aesthetic quality or interest of the books. It's time for a re-evaluation of the travel account, and Adams's book is a first step towards that. It's a pity that Adams planned his book as a sustained comparison between the travel-memoir and the novel, because this has narrowed and in the end deadened his writing on travels, where his expertise is unrivalled. But his plain what induced him to do it – the contingencies of the teaching of literature in university departments. Only a small proportion of what was written before 1800, and survives, is being taught in literature courses, and the selection of that proportion hasn't always been determined by the aesthetic quality or interest of the books. It's time for a re-evaluation of the travel account, and Adams's book is a first step towards that.

haven't read (and, conscientious man, of what they have read as well), to see his stuff arbitrarily or ignorantly disregarded. So he has constructed a case for travel-literature specially geared to the teacher and student of the early modern novel in English. He sets out to overturn one academic theory, which sees the novel as an aesthetic advance on travel-writing, in favour of another, which doesn't engage in evaluation, or recognize the notion of progress in the arts.

Adams divides critics of the eighteenth-century novel into two large camps. On the one hand, there are those who propose a mimetic view of literature – that its prime function is to represent reality. This view is upheld at the general level by Erich Auerbach, and so far as the eighteenth-century novel is concerned by Ian Watt. Always in conflict with such a view, as Adams says, are "the American formalists, the autonomists, those critics such as Mark Schorer and William Handy who attempt to transfer to fiction the techniques of Brooks and Ransom and other 'New Critics' of poetry in order to stress the autonomy of the artifact as art rather than as day-by-day experience". This tradition, best represented in *The Nature of Narrative* (1966), by Robert Kellogg and Robert Scholes, works against the British and novelistic bias of the mimeticists, and, far from showing the form rising in England after 1700, traces it back to the epic, anatomy and romance of ancient and medieval times, as well as to the picaresque and realistic novels of the Renaissance and later. The Kellogg-Scholes hypothesis better fits the range of European fiction written before 1800, and it also does a power of good to the *réel de voyage*.

So, although the novel is not his primary interest, Adams has incidentally written a book about its "early modern" phase, in which the critical emphases are strongly orientated. According to the arch-mimeticist F. R. Leavis, the eighteenth-century novel peaked only with Richardson's *Clarissa*, which laid the groundwork for the generally more mature work of Jane Austen. Adams says practically nothing of Austen and relatively little of Richardson. If he has a Great Tradition, it is generous enough to incorporate Lesage, Marivaux and Prevost; Defoe, and such predecessors and contemporaries as Aphra Behn and Eliza Haywood; the authors of philosophical tales, Swift, Voltaire and Johnson; the novelists whose protagonists are most prone to take journeys, Fielding, Smollett, and the descriptive, nightmarish Ann Radcliffe.

Just like the critics, eighteenth-century novels can be said to fall into two broad types. You might describe them as women's and men's – domestic novels, often featuring a heroine, and set in the only "world" familiar to women, are keyed to the woman reader's experience and values. Adams does not discuss this possibility, being somewhat committed to the macho adventure, and anxious to prove its universality. He chooses less controversial ways of typifying the two tendencies – "the domestic narrative and the adventure narrative, the static and the dynamic", but anyone who thinks there is something loaded in these adjectives is not mistaken. Adams, not naturally the most eloquent of critics, is often indebted to the heady rhetoric of the Canadian archetypalist Northrop Frye, notably to Frye's one-sided polarization of the "idyllic" fictional world associated with happiness, security, and peace, and the "demonic or night world" of exciting adventures. If that strikes you as an odd way of categorizing *Clarissa* (security? peace?), two more metaphors for the complementary structures, the Garden and the River, don't do as much for Rousseau as for Voltaire.

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Voltaire advises St Preux to "settle down," to be content with a cultivated Swiss garden; but Candide, who says, "It is necessary to travel," leaves the Garden of Westphalia, journeys along the River of the world and of history, descends an actual river that leads into El Dorado, and ends, like Voltaire but perhaps not so contentedly, cultivating his symbolic Garden.

It has become plain that, for Frye, two categories of novel is really one too many: he wants a meta-form, which has to be Romance. He also likes to simplify plots into various types of quest, differentiated according to the motives of the protagonist into "quests involving

religion, war, a golden or social utopia, exploration, monetary gain, a person, a knowledge of the world or oneself", yet somehow ultimately still the same – "the marvellous journey", Frye calls it, "the one formula that is never exhausted". Jung is clearly the mentor here rather than Freud, who takes a much more prosaic view of voyagers' common reasons for setting off: "if one motive for travelling is curiosity, a stronger motive is that which impels adolescent runaways". Critics of Frye's school are so persuaded of the dignity and symbolic significance of the typical romance journey that one reads it as Life itself, appropriately divided into stages: first the Hero's Departure following the call to adventure, supernatural aid, and crossing the threshold; second, the Initiation – the great middle of the story – with its road of trials, its temptresses and temptors, its atonement with the Father; and, finally, the Return of the Hero as Master of Two Worlds.

The issue, then, is whether a new category, of prose romance, makes the old novels and travel books richer and more enticing. And the answer, on this showing, is surely no. The mimetic tradition of novel-criticism might have tempted readers to take up real-life travels, since it prompted curiosity about experience, and an interest in the world. A mimetically-trained reader is just what Desdemona was, when she hung on to every detail in Othello's narrative about the Anthropophagi – "twas strange, 'twas passing strange... She wish'd she had not heard it." Desdemona would have stayed at home with her father if, instead of Othello, she had encountered Professor Adams, who does not describe a single meeting between a traveller and a native, cannibal or vegetarian, head growing beneath the shoulders or in the standard place. Few inhabitants of other countries are given a name in this book, none speaks in his own voice. But then travellers seldom speak in their own voices either. There is almost no quotation until the chapter on style, in which some welcome passages in dialect appear, together with a fine description of a waterfall, and two good mountainscapes. Of the surprising sights and smells of foreign places there is no glimpse or whiff. Adams lists dangers when they become standard, like storms at sea, wild beasts, Barbary corsairs, religious martyrdom; but he doesn't give a specific hair-raising adventure that befell an individual traveller in three centuries all over the globe. This is a very odd way of recommending travel literature, even to academics. It would have been more useful if Adams had left Meta-land at intervals, to make it plainer which particular travel-books demand reading and study and, to be really practical, reprinting.

The travel-memoir is particularized, incidental, felt by the intruder-observer on the senses, or it is nothing. It is a form dedicated to discovering novelties and marvels, which, especially in these earlier centuries, would be as much terrifying as wonderful. There is no mention here of the psychology of the traveller, of homesickness, fear, grief at the loss of companions, neurosis brought on by loneliness and despair. He could have told, and doesn't, when travellers first described the symptoms made familiar in the nineteenth century by real-life explorers of the dark interiors of the Americas, Africa and Australia, and by their fictional counterparts Ahab and Kurtz. There is something about Adams's style which makes the most dreadful sufferings seem unreal: "more and more Jesuits came to evangelize, to explore, to brave great danger from nature and natives, often to be cruelly tortured and put to death, and to send back their reports to be published by superiors who constantly edited what was written".

Clearly the book could have been more particular, if it had focused on the feature of travel-literature that made it popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its informativeness about foreign lands. Other studies divide themselves geographically, by the country visited, and there is some sense in this, since descriptive writing must be partly conditioned by what is being described, whether the visitor is entering Tierra del Fuego or Samarkand, paddling up the Amazon or the Nile. The problem with Adams's chosen theme, that the journey-symbols are a quest, is that it elevates all travellers on to the same plane, while reducing

John C. Miller

what they see to mere epiphenomena. So the learned recovery of old and rich cultures, the work of Bruce on Egyptian remains, Anquetil Duperron on Persian religion, Wilkins on Hinduism and Jones on Sanskrit, is a dimension largely absent from this book. You cannot deduce from it what Burke could have meant when he wrote in 1777 that travel literature had replaced history as an instructor on human nature.

The Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once; and there is no state or Gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same instant under our view. The very different Civility of Europe and of China; The barbarism of Tartary, and of Arabia, The Savage State of North America, and of New Zealand.

Instead of all that, Adams has his one concept, the quest, which he apparently also considers educative, for he calls it "movement through space as a learning experience". This is a more private, introverted mode of learning than eighteenth-century educated discourse habitually allowed for, so that it is hard to test such claims in the travel-writing itself, or in contemporary responses to it. The point at which Adams's discussion is fullest concerns the hero and his "motivation", or rather his professional role as a traveller – a trader, for example, a missionary, or soldier or ambassador. Another kind of mind would have conducted this enquiry differently by asking who funded them, in which case the thirteen professional categories into which Adams divides travellers become fewer. The majority of voyages seem to have been at the expense of merchant capitalists, who paid for most legal trading ventures and some of the privates; or one of the Christian Churches; or one of the competitive and often warring Western European governments. A much smaller group (pilgrims, refugees fleeing the law or an angry parent, and book-researchers) might be self-funded; tutors travelling with their charges had a single private employer. So there is more than one way of assessing the "motive" behind any journey. The word "quest" is overlaid with

religious idealism, like much of Frye's critical terminology, and it jars with so much blatant materialism. If we mean by motive the original reason behind a particular investment of European resources and lives, it was usually to enlarge the wealth, influence or power of people who stayed at home, ultimately perhaps a whole nation; or to extend the sway of a European religion, an ambivalent expression of concern for the care of souls.

Since Lévi-Strauss, the leading French theorist on Western uses of knowledge has been Michel Foucault, who is not mentioned in this book. Nor is a critic influenced by Foucault, Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* takes over the topic of travel-writing in 1978, at the point where Adams leaves off. The difference between eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is certainly very significant. Said begins with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt because it opens a new phase in the contest between the two leading imperialist powers, Britain and France, and his topic in *Orientalism* is the cultural relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans in the heyday of imperialism. But even if the heyday was still to come, the contest between Britain and France in North America and India had been a major preoccupation of the previous half-century, so that parts of Said's book have relevance for parts of Adams's.

Said does find a covert "intention" underlying his travellers' writings, even if the individual travellers are unaware of it. He proposes that what they "really" went for was to uphold certain large stereotypes, not so much a justification for a particular journey but for the West's right to be in the East at all. They are helping to define what makes "us" Europeans as opposed to "those" non-Europeans. Since the European character is to be presented as inevitably superior, the Oriental character becomes inferior, servant but not master, loyal executive but not administrator or judge. Whatever the Oriental's abilities, he lacks the ethical calibre of leadership: he is cunning, glib, flatterer, devoid of energy and initiative. Given the hidden structure underlying the Oriental travel-book, its apparent concern with empirical data about the natural and social scene loses its innocence and becomes suspect. Europe's greatly enhanced knowledge of these alien societies becomes the tool by which Western power over them is established. "Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically", the means by which "Europe could advance securely un-metaphorically upon the Orient".

Edward Said's polemical account rests upon a Marxist view of history; his systematizations and his anachronisms have a different basis from Adams's. But in some respects the comparison with Said's book shows up Adams's practice quite cruelly: he takes far too much on trust about his travellers' motives, idealizes them and overstates their importance, because he is not thinking of human beings, social and historical figures, but only of writers, contributors to a genre. There are circumstances when it is appropriate to extrapolate writings, single texts, from their circumstances, to examine formally on their own. But there is no such being as a writer outside history and society, though the modern professional or coterie writer comes nearer to that condition than the weather-stained sea-dog of 1700.

Adams's travelling zombies, sensuously and intellectually inert, undertake journeys that are surrogates for the modern reader's psychic journeys, or symbolic representations of the whole of life. Empson in *Some Versions of Pastoral* introduces the useful term "panification", which he defines as "treating the symbol as everything it symbolizes, which turns out to be everything". He is explaining why certain large, general concepts that attract critics don't stimulate writers and are not often found in good writing. Once the "marvellous journey" becomes a formula, it is on the point of being exhausted.

Two recent paperback reissues in the Century Seafarers series are John Massfield's novel, *The Bird of Dawning* (223pp, Century, £4.95, 0 7126 0334 4); and Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World* (264pp, Century, £4.95, 0 7126 0338 7), first published in 1900, and with an introduction by Arthur Ransome.

Superior lakes

Jonathan Keates

PETER BICKNELL (Editor)
The Illustrated Wordsworth's Guide To The Lakes
208pp. Exeter: Webb and Bower. £9.95.
9 780863 500015
DAVID McCracken
Wordsworth and the Lake District: A Guide to the Poems and their Places
300pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50.
0 19 212240 1

Wordsworth deceived no one when he wrote, towards the end of *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes*, "It was my intention, several years ago, to describe a regular tour through this country, taking the different scenes in the most favourable order, but after some progress had been made in the work it was abandoned from a conviction, that, if well executed, it would lessen the pleasure of the Traveller by anticipation, and, if the contrary, it would mislead him." What eventually resulted was a book which effectively underlined our general unfitness to comprehend the Lakeland landscape, a classic of the Higher Tourism which relegated tours themselves to the brief closing section on "Excursions" and concentrated instead on matters far removed from the world of Baedeker, Murray and Eustace.

For the *Guide's* continuing fascination lies in this deliberate perversity. It needs to be read not as a topographical handbook to sights and memorials but as a companion to the Wordsworthian aesthetic. The prospects unveiled are the Dunmail Raikes and Skiddaws and Helvellyn of the poet's mind, and nowhere throughout the book are we unconscious of that sharp-nosed figure tramping the fells beside us and compelling our acquiescence to his visions.

The quality of absolute fearlessness which lies at the core of Wordsworth's achievement lends the book a sweeping, numinous grandeur. "We feel that we are greater than we know", indeed, as the *Guide* alternately hovers and pounces amid a wealth of observed detail, heightened throughout by a nervous alertness to the shifts of colour in the landscape. "The iron is the principle of decomposition in these rocks; and hence, when they become pulverized, the elementary particles crumbling down, overspread in many places the steep and almost precipitous sides of the mountains with an intermixture of colours, like the compound hues of a dove's neck."

The work's *ipse dixit* essence assumes a thunderous magnificence in the chapter on "Changes, and Rules of Taste for Preventing their Bad Effects", where the influence of Romantic tourism, at its height in 1835 when the *Guide* was in its fifth and fullest edition, is unsparingly examined and condemned. Wordsworth's chosen example is the Islands in Derwentwater, whose woods were felled and replaced with Scotch firs ("a melancholy phar-

lanx, defying the power of the winds, and adding to the regret of the spectator") and where the proprietor had erected a mimic drinking circle, a mock fort and a blockhouse disguised as a church complete with a steeple. Mr. Eglish, in building Belle Isle lodge on the Great Island in Windermere in 1774, had gone so far as to create a Claudian prospect entire, a vulgarly assertive garden wall subsequently swept away to tepid approval from the poet.

The obtrusive nature of this rash of *conspicuous, tempestuous* and bogus hermitages spoiling the lakesides was most irksome. The *Guide* tellingly cites the practical wisdom of Joshua Reynolds, recommending prospectors and improvers to "turn up a stone, or pluck up a handful of grass by the roots, and see what is the colour of the soil where the house is to stand". No special accident, therefore, that the Wordsworthian eye established an enduring principle in even the humblest Lakeland dwellings. One old stonemason is culled "girl arguments about the chimney" between the poet and Dr Arnold: "Woodward he liked a bit o' colour in 'em. And that the chimney coigns sud be natural headed and natural bedded, a lile bit red and a lile bit yellow... and heed a girl fancy an' aw for chimney square up half-way, and round t'other. And we built 'em that road."

What Wordsworth was ultimately in conflict with was the obtuseness of the age's habit, quest after picturesque comparison. Dr. McCracken's outstandingly thorough commentary to the poems in their local contexts includes the poet's irritated comic riposte to the visit of a Windermere visitors' book that "Lord & Lady Darlington, Lady Vane, Miss Teyler, Captain Stamp pronounce this Lake superior to Lac de Geneva, Lago de Como, Lago Maggiore, L'Eau de Zurich, Loch Lomond, Lake Katherine, or the Lakes of Killarney." Not least among the admirable features of McCracken's book, however, is an insistence despite its extensive collection of illustrations and maps, that Wordsworthians should not grow too obsessed with literal analogues. Topographical exactness offers no guarantee of relived experience.

This is, nevertheless, a splendid companion to the *Guide* in the variety and precision of details, from the dead ravens on Hawkshead churchyard gates to the poet's boyhood wish to attempt with a fencing foil at Penrith. Four are quoted *in extenso* (the Duddon sonnets deservedly getting a chapter to themselves) and the result is one of the most satisfyingly compact of recent additions to Wordsworth literature. McCracken includes illustrations of plates, ranging from the Salvatorean sublime of Thomas Smith and James Bourne to the daphnophorous, Blakeish touch of Francis Town and punctuated by Simon McBride's superb photography. Both books are indispensable to the enthusiast.

In tune with the Furies

Bruce Hepburn

RICHARD FRERE
Beyond the Highland Line
217pp. John Murray. £9.50.
0 7195 4136 0

Beyond the Highland Line, whose author does not always seem to be in full possession of his faculties, describes Richard Frere's efforts to get rich quick by living off the land in the vicinity of Inverness in the 1950s. He converts three railway carriages into a habitation for his family, and, while he is about it, into a lightning conductor which lightning obligingly strikes. But then, as he remarks, he is prone to acts of self-destruction. When installing the plumbing it comes to him "rather bleakly" that he may well be drowned in the pit which he seems to have dug expressly for that purpose, and in his efforts to placate the baker whose bills he can't pay, he is nearly submerged beneath a rising tide of cakes. With the family silver he is more successful. He embeds it irrevocably in concrete.

"At which juncture in my life," Mr. Frere

enquires plaintively, "have I taken the wrong turning?" Reading this catalogue of self-inflicted wounds it is difficult to say at what juncture he has not. His poultry die of pestilence and his mushrooms are blown away by a gale which he has been at some pains to install to their shelter. While trying his hand at forestry he indulges his love of "seeing things crackle and flare up" by carelessly, but without intent, creating a raging inferno.

When Frere is around no one has a bad moment. Neither his assistant Bob, "whose hands were rather a mess" after his mad climb with his employer, nor his wife who "moans slightly" after falling through a ten plank which her husband "should have mended. Certainly not the wretched Raymond who "shouts in an agonised voice" after being ating his arm on a circular saw. Unable to understand why the world is unable to adjust itself to his requirements, he enquires of an associate if he takes him for a normal man. One after reading this often very funny but always exasperating account of one man's life to provoke the Furies will be in any danger of doing so.

Interior excursions

Anthony Burgess

V.S. NAIPAUL
Finding the Centre: Two narratives
189pp. Deutsch. £7.95.
0 233 97664 7

In his new novel *Small World* (a work whose profundity is belied by its lightness of tone), David Lodge presents a novelist who has been suffering from writer's block ever since a computer analysis of his idiotic disclosed that his favourite word was "greasy". He is able to earn a living by fashioning television fodder, a matter of plausible dialogue only, but the capacity for hearing the rhythms of a *recit* has been lost because he has been made self-conscious. The breaking of the block is difficult enough for any writer who suffers it, but the breaking in at the start, the generating of a rhythm rather than the recovery of one, entails agonies which must seem at the least to be pretentious posturings to the mere plain reader. When a man considers himself to be a writer before he has written a publishable word, which was, from his boyhood on, V.S. Naipaul's situation, the moment when the courage to type out the first sentence arrives is momentous. It is always a matter of rhythm more than lexis, and the rhythm releases that self-knowledge which foretells the subject-matter, style and tone of a whole oeuvre.

Thirty years ago Mr Naipaul was sitting before an old BBC typewriter with a wad of the special non-rustle paper which is used for radio scripts. A Trinidad scholarship had sent him to Oxford, and down from Oxford ten months previously, he had the ill-paid job of preparing a weekly literary programme to be beamed out to the Caribbean. In a room in the Langham Hotel reserved for freelancers – "to me then not a word suggesting freedom and valour, but suggesting only people on the fringe of a mighty enterprise, a depressed and suppliant class" – he dared to peek out the sentence: "Every morning when he got up Hat would sit on the banister of his back verandah and shout across, 'What's happening there, Bogart?'" He pushed on, single-spacing to grant a better idea of what the thing would look like in print, and ended up with a publishable story. He had a rhythm, and he had the lives of the Port of Spain Indians. The memory of that moment has, in "Prologue to an Autobiography", one of the two pieces that make up this book,

A man of his time

Darrell Bates

CARL WIESE
Expedition in East-Central Africa, 1888-1891:
A report
Edited by Harry W. Langworthy
383pp. Rex Collings. £28.
0 86036 206 x

Carl Wiese's *Expedition in East-Central Africa, 1888-1891* is the narrative of a young German adventurer who journeyed, partly in the Portuguese interest and partly in his own, through the wedge of country between the Zambezi, the Luangwa and what is now called Lake Malawi. His account was in the nature of an official report to the Portuguese authorities in Mozambique who, because of his local knowledge, used him as a go-between for their contacts with the Africans who lived in this remote area. It was therefore written in Portuguese, and it was in the Bulletin of the Geographical Society of Lisbon that it was first published. There it remained untranslated and little known until it came to the notice of an American scholar who was doing a PhD on certain aspects of early Central African history. It was this American scholar, Harry W. Langworthy, who seventy years later finally had the report translated into English and published, first in the United States and now in Britain.

The unearthing of original material is always important and often exciting for historians and others concerned with the past, and we should be grateful to Professor Langworthy for his care and persistence in making this report

prized a recall, unprocessed into fiction, of his own early life.

A reissue of his first major novel, *A House for Mr Biswas*, has an introduction by Naipaul which covers some of the main ground. We see now how much of Naipaul's own father there is in Mr Biswas – not the supernumerary digit and the lethal sneeze perhaps, but the literary ambition and the small journalistic career. It is a comic story, but it is a loving one. Naipaul learned something from his father that his father learned from his editor – Gault MacGowan of the *Trinidad Guardian*: "Write sympathetically." The young Naipaul took his



father's occupation for granted. "It was years before I worked back to a proper wonder at his achievement." What he then saw was that his father had fulfilled in his own way the destiny that Indians wish to reserve to one member of the family – the breaking out of the world of bare subsistence (small farmer, labourer in the cane fields) to become a pundit. Naipaul *père* found his guru in MacGowan; he signed his columns "The Pandit"; in a community where writing was not considered an occupation he became a writer – at a starting salary of four dollars a week. Moreover he became a writer with a writer's conception of truth, which is not

quite the same as the journalist's. The exterior world had to be moulded to the needs of the imagination. The pundit reported: "... his voice was his own, his knowledge of Trinidad Indian life was his own; and the zest – for news, for the drama of everyday life, for human oddity ... – became real." All that was to be eventually needed was the bigger fulfilment in the son – major novelist, Nobel candidate.

What, among other things, *A House for Mr Biswas* did was to release Trinidad from its tangled net of vulgarized exoticism, rum and calypso, and to show its reality. One of the tasks of the novelist is to purvey imaginative human geography if he can. The strength of the book lies in its characters and their setting; but it rests in the memory, until restored by a re-reading, as a very individual verbal artefact – an artistic arrangement of truth retailed by a special voice. Accident led Naipaul away from the novel to the kind of skilled reporting to be found in *An Area of Darkness* and *The Return of Eva Peron*. The gentle humour of the Caribbean books was expelled by a sense of the grimness resident in what is called the Third World. *A Bend in the River*, which I consider to be Naipaul's best novel though I seem to be alone in that judgment, shows the reality of one aspect of modern Africa, and there is hardly a smile in it. "The Crocodiles of Yamoussoukro", which is the second of the two "narratives" in this book, is about the Ivory Coast and more particularly its capital, Abidjan. At the end of an autoroute "that would not disgrace France itself" lies the presidential palace. Next to it is an artificial lake in which man-eating crocodiles, not previously to be seen in the region, "speak at once of danger and of the president's, the chief's, magically granted knowledge of his power as something more than human, something emanating from the earth itself".

The sounds like novelist's material – the conjunction of French rationalism and "night and the forest". But Naipaul is using the narrative technique – selective reporting, the selection of personalities and images – to the mere end of showing what he saw. "Wood fires between stones burned below aluminium pots. One girl was sweeping up wet, nasty-looking rubbish with a broom made from the ribs of long coconut leaves. A few feet away a woman was using a pestle to grind aubergines in a little bowl set in the ground; and there was a neat child's turd near by." You see the Ivory Coast and you hear it too. Mr Niangoran-Bouah, for instance: "Le

monde des blancs est réel. Mais – mais nous, avous, nous autres africains noirs, nous avous tout cela dans le monde de la nuit, le monde des ténébres." It would be too easy to say that that is what Naipaul's travel essay is about – the absorption by the Africa of the taboos and man-eating crocodiles of the rational techniques of the white man – but the uneasiness which is in the aftertaste of the essay has to do with the swallowing capacity of the dark continent. A memorable passage in *An Area of Darkness* expressed the panic of Naipaul at the prospect of his Indianness – not his secure place in Western society as a scholar and a respected writer – qualifying him for being absorbed into the huge brown anonymity. He swallowed Trinidad and elegantly regurgitated it in his distinguished fiction. The rest of the world will permit only the nibbling of Naipaul the brilliant reporter.

Both the pieces in *Finding the Centre* are offered, Naipaul tells us in his foreword, as exemplifications of the "process of writing" and they "seek in different ways to admit the reader to that process". In other words, here is how material is gathered and here is how the imaginative faculty begins to work on it. The bigger end – that of the autobiography or travel book or novel – is not yet accomplished, but some time it may be. As for the people in both narratives, they seemed to be "trying to find order in their world, looking for the centre". That seems to be a facile summation; we need no traveller from the Ivory Coast to tell us this. What Mr Naipaul is really doing is practising his craft, and practising it well, without having to submit to the burden of the artistic shape. This is in order for what may be termed the book of the interim. *A House for Mr Biswas* reminds us that he has bigger things to do.

From the author of the worldwide bestseller SEVEN YEARS IN TIBET

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HEINRICH HARRER
RETURN TO TIBET

Translated by Ewald Osers

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JAMES CAMPBELL

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Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Lhasa revisited

John Hurrell Crook

HEINRICH HARRER

Return to Tibet

Translated from the German by Ewald Osers
184pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.
0297783173

On the cover of Heinrich Harrer's *Return to Tibet* five Chinese soldiers pose before the imposing bulk of the Potala. Their young faces have the self-conscious, hesitant look of weekend trippers in uniform, a look which contrasts strangely with their role as troops occupying a moody and unwelcoming country. Their faces show no understanding of why they are there or of the significance of the great building behind them. Theirs are the faces of ignorance.

This sombre story of invasion, betrayal, destruction and torture is Harrer's attempt to come to terms with the sights and experiences of his recent visit to Lhasa, his first since leaving Tibet over thirty years ago. His testimony is important, for he is one of the most knowledgeable members of that small and diminishing band of Europeans who lived in Lhasa before the Chinese occupation.

Harrer was in India on a climbing expedition when the Second World War broke out and he was interned as an enemy alien. His remarkable escape with Peter Aufschnaiter, their epic

journey across the Himalayas and their subsequent seven years in Tibet are all well known; he is a personal acquaintance of many influential Tibetans of the former régime and the childhood friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

His visit in 1982 involved no heroics; as a member of a tourist party he was shepherded by Chinese guides and only allowed to see what they felt he ought to see. But as a fluent Tibetan speaker with personal friends still living, he managed to gain a comprehensive impression of life in Lhasa today. He presents a collage of memories, reminiscence and straight reporting. We jump from the bleak uniform reality of the present to the colourful culture of the recent past, from brief accounts of history and politics, personalities and events to the hopes and despairs of today. Black-and-white photographs taken before the 1950s and colour shots of 1982 mingle in an effective montage, but it is always the old prints that capture the attention.

Harrer is not a scholar and his work is hardly a political or social analysis of either past or present. Nevertheless, his vivid comparative reporting, the clear accounts of a number of important interviews and contemporary themes and his deeply felt sense of human tragedy give this book an importance for the general reader far greater than other tourist travelogues of the last few years.

It could not have been easy for this lover of Tibet and the Tibetans to contain his feelings

on encountering the cultural poverty of the Chinese occupation of Lhasa nor, in the company of rich yet poorly informed western tourists, to look over the dreadful destruction to historic sites and monasteries which he had known so well in former times. The charm of the old city he knew, the beauty of the vernacular architecture, the flowers, the parks and gardens, are today all gone. Instead Harrer found a wilderness of characterless metal-roofed buildings, roads that cut straight across historic precincts and instead of the peace of a city without wheels all the roar and noise of a modernized town. To be fair, not all these disappointments can be attributed to the Chinese occupation alone, for they are concomitants of modernization everywhere. It is the cultural destruction that disturbs, the realization that a thing of great beauty has gone for ever, that, in their ideological stampede, the Red Guards blew to oblivion an architectural, artistic and cultural heritage that should rightly have remained as one of the treasures of this world. Harrer's book is the working through of a personal grief that many readers will make their own.

By 1982 the Chinese attitude had thawed. After all, the Red Guards had not only done irreparable damage to Tibet but also to the Chinese heritage in China itself. The new leaders have a right to claim the more relaxed policy as their own. But even though the practice of Buddhism is now possible in at least some temples, it is difficult for Tibetans to believe in the change. There seems to be a nasty Chinese deception whereby a thousand flowers are encouraged to bloom simply in order for their heads to cut off. Neither the representatives of the Dalai Lama who recently visited their homeland nor the welcoming common people could be sure of this apparent change of heart. Harrer himself detected many shams, butter and meat markets that appeared only when tourists were present, repairs to monasteries that stopped as the visitors went on and, more generally, the whole patched-up edifice of Lhasa today, dressed so as to attract foreign currency in a developing tourist industry.

There is no doubt that the Chinese govern-

ment has changed its policy on Tibet, and the liberalization and Tibetization have been tantamountly begun, but the ideals of Peking are only slowly into the actions of officials in Lhasa, and the recent reappearance of security for optimism. The Tibetan problem will not go away, either for the Chinese masters or for the conscience of the rest of the world.

Harrer claims that time is on the side of Tibet. He believes this because he thinks the depth of the culture lies beyond assault. So far this has proved to be the case; Tibetans have a powerful sense of their collective identity; their religion allows that "inner emigration" which the Poles have recently described as the only response to an outer police control, and their sense of injustice and deprivation is strong. Only a real social change can bring about some accord between them and the Chinese with whom the responsibility for a solution must ultimately rest.

Yet time is an odd commodity. The Tibetan diaspora is integrated primarily by the personal charisma of the Dalai Lama. On his death there can be no quick transition of loyalty to a figure of equal eminence. The temptation to enjoy the membership of the western world and to be seduced by consumerism and material hedonism must affect the generation of young Tibetans now growing up abroad. Yet they hold in conscience the cause of their oppressed minority who are their kindred in greater China? Harrer's book attempts to balance these fears and hopes. The greatest of the Tibetans are now giving the world is that the dharma — the Buddhist way of truth. His great diligence they are establishing centers of scholarship excellence in India. Upon the gates of these schools a great responsibility rests, for although Buddhists and Communists can certainly talk together there can be no dialogue without freedom of expression, no creativity without social justice, and no nation without a restoration of cultural roots. Starting a dialogue is only the first step; the Chinese truly want a solution to their side of the problem, they could start by building a where now only suspicion lurks in the mouldered cloisters.

Under eastern eyes

Andrew Motion

EDWARD ARDIZZONE

Indian Diary 1952-53

155pp. Bodley Head. £15.
0370 305256

In the winter of 1952 Edward Ardizzone was invited by Unesco to visit India for six months as part of a four-man team taking part in the rather pompously titled Seminar for the Production of Audio Visual Aids for Fundamental Education. It was Ardizzone's habit to keep illustrated diaries during various periods of his life (his *Diary of a War Artist* was published in 1947), and it is surprising — in view of its excellence — that it has taken the present fashion for things Indian to provoke the publication of this account of his time in Delhi, Bombay and South India. It was Ardizzone's own favourite among his diaries, and contains many drawings of charm and some of real distinction.

Almost anything by Ardizzone is worth having in print — but it has to be said that the text of *Indian Diary* is slight. It is not clear from the publisher's note or from Malcolm Muggeridge's introduction whether Ardizzone wanted it published — not because he might have worried about its indiscretions and revelations (there aren't any) but because a great deal of it is simply inconsequential: "Taxi 16 rupees"; "Morning shopping"; "Class as usual". Ardizzone's work for Unesco is something which — given the conditions of the diary form — he feels under no obligation to invest with drama or structure, and the book is a ramshackle hodgepodge of unsatisfactory classes in illustration-cum-lithography-cum-silkscreening, wearing some officials, and baffled students: "This is like teaching little children to draw. One

almost has to show them how to put in drawing pins."

The real benefits of his trip lie in the energy of its ostensible purpose to teach. By far the most arresting passages in the writing are versions of sense impressions which sound like and often are, notes for pictures: "The mud of the Euphrates. Mud and blue. Like a terribly winged bird." The pictures themselves show the same humorous watchfulness. In many of the early ink drawings he seems more looked-at than looking — a bald sphere of spindly legs being scrutinized as he eats, water and is introduced. Typically, these speech-casual-seeming sketches convey the subconscious and authentic form of people and objects with an almost impressionistic lightness of touch. And in his later drawings of Indian figures and scenes, his celebrated cross-hatching successfully evokes the huddle of street-scenes or the dazzling contrasts of light and shade in the interiors.

The same qualities apply to the handful of washes and watercolours scattered through the book — but because they are reproduced in black and white, it is impossible to gauge whether other virtues of colour and light they might possess: a pity. Still, to offset the disappointment, there is an engaging three-page illustration originally commissioned by Penguin (then under Muggeridge's editorship) which wittily shows the circumstances under which some of the *Diary* was produced. In the top band of the drawing, "Sketching", Ardizzone is seated outside, a crow on his shoulder, sniffing his trousers, a cow-kissing his cheek and children's faces clustered as thickly as bees around him. In the bottom band, "Illustrating", he is shown in a room, surrounded by a group of people, some of whom are looking at his work. The drawing is a self-contained little scene, usually managed.

To the end of the Awash River

Wilfred Thesiger

Wilfred Thesiger attended Haile Selassie's coronation in 1930 as a member of the mission of the Duke of Gloucester. When the ceremonies were over he went down by himself to the Danakil country on a hunting expedition.

The Danakil did not hunt and the Abyssinians, who had wiped out most of the game elsewhere, were afraid to venture into their country, since among the Danakil a man's standing depended on the number of men he had killed and castrated. Much of their country was still unexplored, including the remote Aussa Sultanate, where the Awash River was reputed to disappear. This considerable river rose in the highlands near Addis Ababa, flowed down into the Danakil desert but never reached the sea. Three expeditions, including Munzing's, had been exterminated in the interior of the Danakil country towards the end of the last century.

During this month I led the life for which I had always yearned, hunting big game on my own in the wilds of Africa; but now I realized that this expedition had meant more to me than just the excitement of hunting. I was on the borders of virtually unexplored land inhabited by dangerous, untouched tribes. Before I turned back I watched the Awash flowing to its unknown destination. I felt the lure of the unexplored, the compulsion to go where others had not been.

I went back to Oxford for another three years. I thought continuously of that slow-flowing muddy river, of the arid, scrub-covered plains and volcanic mountains, the herds of oryx and gazelle, the mat-roofed encampments, the slender, graceful figures in loin-cloths, attractive, armed and unpredictable. I was determined to return as soon as I had taken my degree, to follow the Awash River into the fabulous Sultanate of Aussa and to discover how and where it ended; the challenge presented by the murderous company of the Danakil and the physical difficulties of the journey was irresistible. The following is an extract from an account of that journey, currently in preparation.

I had a long talk to Yaio when he came to our camp in the morning and found him friendly and easy to talk to. He told me that the Sultan had been well informed of my movements ever since I had left the Awash Station in November, and assured me I had acquired a good name in Bahdu and elsewhere. He was very bitter about the French who, he declared, had recently seized part of their land. I had heard in Addis Ababa that there had been a confrontation with the Sultan's forces when French troops had moved into hitherto unoccupied territory which they claimed was on their side of the frontier. Shortly after this they had inflicted heavy losses on a raiding party from Bahdu. These two incidents had increased the hatred and resentment which the Sultan and his people felt for them. Unfortunately for me the Danakil in general made no distinction between the French and other Europeans: Yaio mentioned that a fortnight previously the Aisa had murdered a German who was working for the Government on the frontier, not far from the railway.

We travelled only five miles that afternoon before camping underneath a rocky hill covered with *waddellas*, the tumuli in which the Danakil entomb their dead. South of Tandaho, the *waddellas* had consisted of mounds of stones piled over the chambers containing the corpses; there were many of these grave mounds which, placed deliberately in prominent positions, were a conspicuous feature of the countryside. In Aussa, the *waddellas* were equally numerous and conspicuous, but here they were far more elaborate and of varying design. A circular platform, constructed to present a smooth surface some three and a half feet in height, replaced the original mound. Frequently a cone, three to four feet high, was erected on the platform; this I think derived from the slab of rock often set up over a grave mound to scare away hyenas. A man who had avenged the killing of his brother signified this by setting up two stones on the *waddella*. I saw such stones decorating the tops of two cones. Women and children were also buried in

waddellas and the same *waddella* might be used again and again.

Next day, March 29, we went a further six miles down the river and camped at a place called Gurumudli, in a forest clearing where the ground was carpeted with a clover-like vegetation with a heavy scent: it gave me pleasure to watch the camels and the four mules grazing on it. In the late afternoon a messenger arrived to inform me that the *Amoita* was on his way to visit me.

We prepared camp to receive him and, as the sun set, we heard the sound of distant trumpets. The soldiers and my men had turned out to form a guard of honour when a second messenger ran up. He gave me to understand that the *Amoita* had with him too many men to enter my camp; instead he invited me to meet him nearby. I left two men in camp and, with Omar, Yaio and all the others, followed the messenger into the forest.

The brief twilight was almost gone, but a full moon had risen, affording an uncertain light among the trees. We had gone some distance, further than I had expected, when I sensed rather than saw that the forest on either side of the track was alive with people. A little further



Wilfred Thesiger in Abyssinia

and we emerged into a large clearing. With almost a shock, I saw some 400 armed men drawn up in line, motionless and silent, their loin-cloths very white in the moonlight against the dark forest background. In front of them the Sultan was seated on a chair, with his household slaves grouped behind him, all of them with rifles in crimson silk covers.

He rose to greet me. My men bowed low and, except for Omar, withdrew; the Sultan then ordered everyone else, except for Yaio and Talahum, his own interpreter, out of earshot. He looked round repeatedly to make sure no one had approached and two or three times waved away groups who were already at a distance. Omar had had the forethought to bring a chair for me; I should have been at a disadvantage had I had to stand.

The Sultan was bare-headed and dressed entirely in white, in narrow Abyssinian-type trousers, a long shirt and a finely woven *shamma*. He wore a superb, silver-mounted dagger, which had probably belonged to his father, even his grandfather, and he held a black, silver-topped stick. Though he was darker, he reminded me at once of Haile Selassie: like him he was small and gracefully built, with a bearded oval face, finely moulded features and shapely hands. His expression was sensitive and proud. I was aware that his authority was absolute, that his slightest word was law. I was certain that he could be ruthless, having heard tales of his appalling prison — men said it was better to be dead than shut up there — yet he gave me no impression of wilful cruelty.

As I looked round the clearing at the ranks of squatting warriors and the small isolated group of my own men, I knew that this moonlit meeting in unknown Africa with a savage potentate who hated Europeans was the realization of my boyhood dreams. I had come here in search of adventure: the mapping, the collecting of animals and birds was all incidental. The knowledge that somewhere in this neighbourhood three previous expeditions had been exterminated, that we were far beyond any hope of assistance, that even our whereabouts were unknown, I found wholly satisfying.

The Sultan made the customary enquiries about my health, speaking in Arabic to Omar who translated to me. He then asked some length about my journey; the route I had fol-

lowed, how long it had taken me and whom I had met, mentioning several names. I realized he knew the answers to these questions already. There were frequent pauses during which he eyed me intently, stroking his beard and fingering his prayer beads. The night was very still, despite the large number of men gathered round us; if they spoke at all it must have been in whispers. I remember hearing a hyena howling in the distance, probably near our camp, and the purring of nightjars as they flew about overhead.

The Sultan finally asked me where I wished to go. I told him. There was another long pause while he appeared to ponder, then he said abruptly that we would meet again in the morning in the same place. Yaio and a considerable number of Danakil escorted me back to my camp where Yaio pointed out twelve large skins of milk and two of clarified butter, a further present from the Sultan. Omar seemed to think things had gone well; I hoped so. Everything, even our survival, depended on the impression I had created.

I sent Omar and some of my men in the morning with an open-sided tent, chairs and a carpet to make arrangements for my meeting



Wilfred Thesiger in Abyssinia

with the Sultan. I went there at nine o'clock. The Sultan was sitting under a tree; his troops, possibly more than the night before, formed three sides of a square. I escorted the Sultan to the tent, where Omar served him with coffee, tea and biscuits, all of which I tasted first. Yaio refused to be seated and he and Talahum, the interpreter, screened us with the *shammars* while we ate. I knew that Talahum was also the Sultan's trusted adviser. Unlike Yaio, he did not inspire me with confidence.

The Sultan's first question was whether I worked for the Abyssinian Government. Why, if not, was I accompanied by Government soldiers? Was I concerned with the boundary disputes with the French? The German, who had been killed by the Aisa, had he been employed by the Government? Did I know him? Did I know the French? Why had I come to Aussa unless I was working for the Government? What was the purpose of this journey? Why had I risked my life in Bahdu just to follow a river? What reason had I for following the Awash? What good would it do me to reach its end? There were animals to hunt and plenty to shoot elsewhere in Abyssinia where I should be safe. Why come to Aussa?

At intervals he turned to Omar and questioned him, often at length, no doubt seeking confirmation of my answers. I assured him that I did not work for the Government, and had no concern with the frontier except to cross it on my way to Tajura on the coast. The Emperor was a personal friend; three years earlier he had invited me from England to his coronation and he had now sent soldiers with me to ensure my safety as far as Aussa. I was a young man who sought adventure and enjoyed travelling in little-known countries. No European knew where or how the Awash ended; I had set out to discover this. It was important to me to succeed and I had risked my life, as he knew, to come here. If I succeeded, I told him, I should acquire fame in my country.

Eventually he asked me what route I wished to follow to get to Tajura. I told him I had permission from the French to enter their territory north of Lake Abhe and had been instructed to report my arrival at their fort at Dikil. The Sultan, retired that the French frontier was far away, and that he knew of no lake called Abhe. He sent Yaio ostensibly to

make enquiries; he came back to report that no one had heard of Abhebad. The Sultan then said he would make further enquiries about this; but he did at least agree to send me to Tajura.

I then produced a sack of coffee beans, which was too heavy for one man to carry, and four large pots of sweet jelly. I said I was ashamed to give him such insignificant presents after all his kindness to me, but I was far from my country. I tasted each pot of jelly and one was spilt. The Sultan said this was a sign of good luck. Until then he had taken only a sip of coffee, now he drank two cups and finished the biscuits. Yaio, Talahum and Omar then drank the tea. Four bulls were driven past for me to see before they were taken to my camp. After this the Sultan bade me farewell and moved off, surrounded by his soldiers. They were an impressive body of men: all were armed with rifles and many wore the decorations which signified their prowess as warriors.

Waiting for me in camp was one of the Sultan's slaves whom he had asked me to treat. He had been bitten in the finger by a snake some time before, and his whole arm was swollen and suppurating. This slave had been with Lij Yaio when he had taken refuge in the Danakil country after Negus Michael had been defeated and captured at Sagle in 1916. He was one of many who came to me for medicine. I did what I could and wished I could do more for them. They had such pathetic faith in my power to cure even hopeless cases. I remember in particular one living skeleton, who was carried in to the camp and laid before my tent.

In the afternoon the Sultan sent for Omar, Ato Shone, Ali Wali and Ahamedo. Though his residence at Fursi was close by in the open country across the river, he met them in the forest on this side of the river. He evidently had no intention that Omar or Ato Shone should see Fursi, feeling as mistrustful of them as he did of me. He kept them for a long time and asked many searching questions to confirm what I had told him. He still suspected that I worked for the Abyssinian Government, whom he mistrusted as much as he hated the French. However, when Yaio visited me in the evening he told me that the Sultan had given permission for me to follow the Awash to its end which, he said, was in a large lake not far away.

I had several discussions with Yaio about the route I should take after I had reached the end of the river. He pressed me to go directly to Tajura on the coast. The French authorities in Jibuti had, however, given me permission to cross the frontier, provided I went to Dikil; they had not as yet given me permission to go on to Tajura, though I hoped they would do so once I reached Dikil.

Yaio maintained that the route to Dikil was not feasible for us, since there was a very difficult mountain to cross and our camels were worn out. He insisted that Dikil was far off with little water on the way and said that we should probably die of thirst if our camels collapsed; only small parties with fresh camels ever went that way, whereas the route to Tajura was easy, with adequate water and grazing. I suspected that the real reason was that the Sultan did not wish me to become acquainted with the disputed area near Dikil. Though I was in his hands I could foresee trouble with the French if I went directly to Tajura. They were likely to be especially angered by the unauthorized passage through their colony of eighteen Abyssinian soldiers: I was also aware that these soldiers' presence might provoke the tribes across the border. Yet I could not leave them in Aussa, since they would never get back to Afdera on their own, especially now that they were quarrelling among themselves. A third alternative, which I never seriously considered, was to go across the desert to the railway near the frontier. This would take me through the territory of the Aisa, who were perpetually at war with the Danakil. We should have no guide and no means of making friendly contact with them. The Government, I was sure, had provided the German with guides and with what they considered an adequate escort, but this had not saved him.

We stayed for another two days at Gurumudli where I collected more birds, several of which I had not previously seen. Abdi shot a vulture, which was promptly snapped up by a

crocodile when it fell in the river. The river had risen again and was now very dirty.

Before we left Gurumudli the Sultan sent me two large sacks of maize, one of which I gave to the soldiers. Not being allowed to travel in the open country on the far side of the river, and the forest immediately ahead of us being impassable for camels, we were taken round under Kulsikuma, a short but difficult march among piles of boulders. The ill-defined track passed between two small lakes; in the largest, called Galifagibad, were several hippopotamuses. Near the camp I found fresh tracks of leopard and that night sat up over a goat. The mosquitoes were appalling and all that came near was a hyena which I drove off with a handful of gravel.

In the morning Yaio, Abdullahi and I climbed to one of the summits above the smaller lake, and from there I looked out over a luxuriant plain, roughly square in shape and about twenty miles across, ringed by barren mountains. I was thrilled, for as far as I knew no other European had seen this legendary land. This was Aussa, the very heartland of the Sultan's domain. Below me I could see where the Awash, bordered by the thick forest in which I had met the Sultan, entered Aussa through a gap between the Majenta and Kulsikuma Mountains. The river then divided, the smaller branch bisecting Aussa while the main river bore north-east under Kulsikuma towards Gumare, renowned in Danakil songs as the mighty mountain that halted the Awash.

At the foot of the formidable Gumare precipice the river turned southwards and entered Adobada or the White Water, a long, narrow lake that extended under a great wall of rock to the south-eastern corner of Aussa. I noted that the river appeared to emerge from the southern end of the lake and continue westwards towards a break in the mountains. Through the glasses the southern half of Aussa looked like a grassy plain, whereas much of the northern part was covered in forest.

Three miles away, in an extensive clearing in the forest, I could make out through my field-glasses the Sultan's residence at Fursi. It appeared to comprise three large, mat-roofed houses inside a compound. Yaio, who spoke Amharic, some of which I could remember from my childhood, explained that during the rainy season much of Aussa was flooded, and that the Danakil then moved into the mountains with their herds. As we had climbed the mountain, we had passed several small encampments and the sites of others. Some of these shelters were of mats over a framework of sticks; others were built of rocks. At midday the heat in the latter must have been stifling.

There was a welcome stretch of grassland between the forest and the Kulsikuma range; the lower slopes of which were marked by a great many *waldellas*. Next morning we marched across this plain until the mountains closed in on the river. We forded it and then followed a well-marked track through very dense forest; in occasional clearings the grass grew as high as eight feet. Eventually we came to an open space where we camped. In the

evening Yaio and I went out to look for bushbuck, but we soon gave it up for it was impossible to move off the track except on hands and knees.

The next day we reached open country, with several villages and large herds of cattle; the cattle here were humped, most of them black with sweeping half-moon horns, curving backwards and inwards. I saw no horses in Aussa. In one place we had considerable difficulty getting the camels across a lava flow, its thrust-up ridge being divided by deep cracks. Beyond it the river flowed across an open plain, through beds of high, tufted reeds. We camped near a large village close to the river.

The village headman was a person of importance; he had the Sultan's confidence and had been a close friend of his father's. He entertained us royally, presenting me with two oxen, three very fat sheep and three goats, as well as nine skins of milk mixed with ghee and red pepper. Yaio gave a skin full of ghee to Omar and another to the Abyssinian soldiers, who had an unseemly row while dividing it among themselves.

By now they were split into three hostile groups; Ato Shone had lost all control over them and slept in Omar's tent for safety. They made a sorry contrast to my own Abyssinians who, under Kassimi, worked happily together. In the evening the Somalis performed a war dance to honour the headman; the spectacular effect of the dancing was enhanced by the clouds of dust that rose from under the stamping feet.

We waded across the river in the morning by a deep ford that gave us some trouble with the camels, and then crossed a treeless plain to the Gumare escarpment, where we camped. Some small villages nestled among the debris at the foot of the precipice. This unbroken wall of rock, extending a good twenty miles, was immensely impressive, especially when lit by the evening sun. In the morning we loaded what wood we could find and headed south for Adobada. I intended to follow its western shore but found this was impossible, since the Awash flowed into the lake across an expanse of soft mud. We therefore returned to our previous camp.

I now decided to follow the eastern edge of the lake, and only to take Kassimi, Abdullahi and Said with me; Omar would find a camp-site for the others on the Awash. We started at dawn accompanied by Yaio, who carried the Sultan's staff, and two of his retainers. We soon reached the lake. In most places the water lapped among the fallen rocks. Marks on the cliff indicated that in the past the lake had been eighteen feet deeper; it must then have flooded a great part of Aussa. Even recently the level of the lake had fluctuated considerably. Yaio remembered a year when the Awash ran dry before it reached Galifagi. Adobada had then shrunk to two separate lakes, and all the other lakes had dried up completely.

The water's edge was littered with the remains of catfish and marked with quantities of small white shells. Everywhere were tracks of hippo. I heard them grunting far out in the lake but saw only one. On the other hand I did see innumerable crocodile either cruising about in the lake or basking on the shore. The largest I saw were about twelve feet long. Yaio said they were dangerous, unusual for crocodiles living in lakes with an abundance of fish. Some of them certainly swam purposely towards us when we approached the water's edge. Once I inadvertently found myself between a large crocodile and the water; it rushed at me with open jaws. I wasted no time getting out of the way.

It took us six hours to reach the southern end of the lake where we stopped for the night. We had brought two mules with us to carry food, cooking pots and blankets.

Yaio insisted that the Awash ended in this lake and that it had no exit. I doubted this after what I had seen from Kulsikuma, and more especially because the lake water was fresh; so in the morning, despite his vigorous protests, I climbed a small hill to settle the question. As I expected, the Awash flowed out of Adobada; it then passed through three small lakes and entered a large swamp. From here I could not see if the river continued beyond the swamp, but I could see a suggestive looking gap in the mountains.

I had a bathe before we started back. When I put on my shorts there was a scorpion inside them; it stung me twice before I could rip them off. We got back to the main camp the following morning.

Omar had chosen a pleasant site under some trees near the Awash. While I had been away he had made discreet enquiries and learned that the Awash flowed down to the border of the Aisa country where it finally ended in a large salt lake. I therefore told Yaio that I intended to take a small party down the west side of the lake to verify that the river did really end in the swamp I had seen. This made him very angry. He said I had seen everything which I had asked to see, and warned me that the Danakil in Aussa were becoming increasingly restive as a result of my prolonged stay in their country. They expected me to leave tomorrow; if I stayed longer or went off again in another direction they might well make trouble.

I had noticed that even Ali Wai was keeping away from me, not wishing to be compromised. I told Yaio, however, that I was prepared to take this risk. I insisted that having come so far I must reach the end of the river, otherwise my whole journey would have been in vain. I should feel ashamed to go back to my people to confess that I had failed. Surely the Sultan, who had been so helpful and hospitable, would not thwart me now. Yaio eventually said he would send a man to the Sultan for his instructions.

For the next two days while I waited for news I collected more birds with Abdi. We found several pythons in the reed-beds by the river. I shot and skinned one measuring sixteen feet. Then Talahum arrived with a letter. I was given the choice of leaving at once for Tajura, or of following the river to its end, accompanied by all my men, and then going on to Dikil. Yaio, Talahum and others of the Sultan's people urged me to leave next day for Tajura. They said they now regarded me as their friend, reiterated the difficulties of the Dikil road and said they did not wish me to risk my life by going that way.

I was admittedly alarmed by their description of this route. However, as they would not agree to my returning here from the end of the river, in order to take the easier Tajura road, I told them I would go to Dikil. They went off for yet another discussion among themselves. When they came back they said that as I insisted on going to the end of the river they would take me there. They now confessed that the river ended in a large bitter-tasting lake called Abhebad, within a day's march of Dikil. The difficulty would be in getting to Abhebad, after which the road was easy.

When I proposed travelling on the west side

of Adobada they insisted that I must follow my previous route along its eastern shore. I agreed to this without dispute, more than satisfied to have obtained permission to go to Abhebad, "the evil-smelling lake". It sounded as if it was a sodium lake, which convinced me that the Awash really did end there. Yaio then went off to inform the Sultan of my decision but promised to meet me at the far end of Adobada.

We packed up camp and started next morning, escorted by Talahum and his men. On April 13, the camels found the rock-strewn edge of the lake difficult going, so we stopped three hours later at a spring near the shore. The water in the lake was surprisingly dirty, whereas this spring water was clean and sweet. We had not drunk the lake since we entered the Danakil country. Personally, I would forgo any other comfort for clean water.

It took us two more days to reach the end of the lake, where Yaio was waiting for us as he had promised. He had brought with him five more oxen and twelve skins of milk from the Sultan. I felt overwhelmed by this generosity. The Danakil in Bahdu and elsewhere had all been lavish with gifts of meat and milk. They might be murderously inclined as a race, but no one could call them inhospitable. We now had a friendly discussion about our route, while a spectacular thunder-storm raged in the distance over Kulsikuma. Yaio said the only route ahead was up the mountain, under which we were camped, and then back down again further on. From the top, he said, we should see Abhebad.

The following afternoon we climbed pushing and pulling the reluctant camels up wards, until we eventually reached the plateau and found a place where we could clear enough boulders for them to kneel down and be unloaded. Nothing grew among these rocks other than a very occasional leafless tree bush, but the view was immense. Below us and far nearer than I had expected, set in a limitless waste of volcanic rock, was a great expanse of water, sombre under threatening storm clouds.

It was there that the Awash ended. I had come far and risked much to look on this desolate scene, a striking contrast to the massive pasture land and extensive forests of Aussa. Sitting on a rock I checked the sketch map I had made, and took more bearings on the surrounding mountains and prominent peaks; in the far distance I could just discern the black hills around Tandaho.

Having mapped Abhebad, Wilfred Theodor continued across the lava desert to the coast. Fourteen of his eighteen camels died before he reached Tajura.

Explosive explorer

Robin Hanbury-Tenison

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251pp. Bodley Head. £8.95.
0370 304799

John Blashford-Snell is doubtless regarded as a great asset to the British Army, encouraging recruitment, involving many young people. In exciting projects and creating an image of daring-do which is welcome in an age of packaged pleasure. In *Mysteries* he casts himself rather endearingly as an enthusiastic Biggles, leading his men in search of one elusive mystery after another. Most of it is harmless *Boy's Own* fun, but there is a real danger in this approach.

One endlessly wonders why, when Blashford-Snell is in such a splendid position to influence the young towards a better understanding and appreciation of the fragile and fascinating world in which they live he must always be so predictably prejudiced about everything. Jungles are always "infamous"; monkeys give "horrific screams"; "loathsome creatures" abound, and the Indians are "unsimiling". This is bad enough in creating an impression of a hostile world in need of man's domination; what is quite indefensible is the attitude that virtually all natural obstacles to the progress of his expeditions should be eliminated by a show

of force, usually dynamite. Quite small projects which, with the possibly legitimate purpose of making them exciting for young soldiers, he hails as major scientific breakthroughs, are accomplished at the cost of constant explosions — as coral reefs, lava cliffs, chunks of rain forest and stretches of swamp are blown up. Inevitably more harm is done to the environment in this way than can be justified by the knowledge acquired by the young enthusiasts. The worst shock comes early on in the book when a daring young Blashford-Snell, ready as ever to cure the world's ills dramatically, hears in a bar of a fearsome sea monster which is said to be terrorizing some local Greek fishermen. Fearlessly swimming over the reef he spots "a giant sting ray ... one huge mangle-lent eye stared unblinkingly at me ... I could only hazard a guess that its wings were ten feet from tip to tip". (Mediterranean rays or sharks never exceed three or four feet across and are perfectly harmless if not attacked, feeding on molluscs on the sea bed.) Returning with a "five pound charge of plastic explosive" he blows it and a good deal of the reef out of the water.

Such jolly goings-on continue through the book as the author in his solar topee makes his intrepid way through a hostile world. One cannot believe that either Blashford-Snell or his many readers can really take it all seriously. For the world if they ever do.

An unaffected narrative

Joel J. Gold

JERÓNIMO LOBO
The *Itinerário* of Jerónimo Lobo
Translated by Donald M. Lockhart
417pp. Hakluyt Society. £15.
0904180 158

This English translation of Father Jerónimo Lobo's first-person narrative of his travels into seventeenth-century Ethiopia makes available at last the authoritative account known to English-speaking readers only in brief essays or the abridgment by Samuel Johnson.

Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, converted to Christianity in the fourth century and then surrounded and cut off by hostile Islamic and pagan peoples from the rest of the Christian world, appealed to the European imagination as the possible land of Prester John, the Christian ruler of an empire somewhere in Asia or Africa. Reports by Portuguese explorers in the sixteenth century about Ethiopia and its idiosyncratic Christianity aroused interest and, in some instances, heated arguments between Catholic and Protestant scholars.

As in other exotic destinations — China, the Americas — Catholic missionaries were among the earliest visitors to record their observations of the dangers, the manner of living, the natural history, the religious practices of the inhabitants. Francisco Alvarez, chaplain to an early Portuguese expedition, published *Verdadeira Informaçao das terras do Preste Joan das Indias* in 1540; Manoel de Almeida's manuscript *Historia de Ethiopia* was abridged by Balhasar Telles for his *Historia geral de Ethiopia* a la (1660). Telles included material from other Jesuit travellers, among them Jerónimo Lobo, who had been a missionary in Ethiopia from 1624 to 1634. Lobo wrote, and made available to the Royal Society, essays on the Nile, the Red Sea, Prester John, the unicorn, and the palm tree. These were translated into English and published without the author's name in 1669. But the long manuscript of his travels on which Lobo was known to have been working was unpublished until it fell into the hands of a French cleric, Joachim Le Grand, who translated it into French and published it as *Relation historique d'Abissinie* (or, with a reprinted title page, *Voyage historique d'Abissinie*) in 1728. This is the version which the young Johnson translated and "epitomized" for an English reading public in 1735.

But the Portuguese manuscript from which Le Grand worked disappeared, presumed lost in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. In 1947, Father M.G. da Costa discovered the manuscript *Itinerário* (differing slightly from Le Grand's source) in the Public Library at Braga. His edition appeared in Portuguese in 1971. That discovery and publication finally allowed readers to meet Jerónimo Lobo in his own words and without the alterations inherent in any translation or in the manipulations of Johnson's epitome. Donald M. Lockhart's translation of the *Itinerário* for the Hakluyt Society edition is clear and straightforward; it is faithful to the Portuguese text and resists sharpening the occasional clumsy sentence or infelicitous phrasing of the source.

Lobo will not charm readers through his style. Although he sometimes reveals a sense of humour, the writing is matter of fact, without flourishes, chronological, with only rare attempts at foreshadowing. The appeal of Lobo's prose lies in the detailed observation, the carefully marshalled facts about customs and events, natural history and geographical setting. Johnson, whose distrust of travellers' tales was seldom muted, praised Lobo specifically for not amusing his readers with "romantic absurdities or incredible fictions. . . . He appears by his modest and unaffected narration to have described things as he saw them, to have copied nature from the life, and to have consulted his senses not his imagination."

This full-length edition of the *Itinerário* would support that appraisal, allowing the modern reader to enter Lobo's world and to understand from the missionaries' point of view the struggle to bring the Ethiopian Christians back into the fold. Moreover, the Hakluyt edition has a knowledgeable introduction by C.F. Beckingham, which sets the travel in context and provides useful information about

Lobo himself. Beckingham's notes clarify the geography (many African locations have changed names) and indicate the variations between Le Grand's French translation and the *Itinerário*.

Lobo's narrative incorporates a personal account of voyages, sea battles, shipwreck, threats from hostile natives, imprisonment by the Turks, and much more, with descriptions of the Red Sea, the source of the Nile, and the birds and beasts of Ethiopia. On this level the *Itinerário* reads like an adventure tale. But the strongest thread that runs through it is Lobo's faith in what he and his fellow Jesuits were doing as they laboured to bring the Ethiopian Church over to Rome. The mass rebaptisms and the purging of Judaic and Coptic practices are presented by Lobo as essential to the mission; but when the reign of the sympathetic Susenyos ended, the beleaguered Jesuits had few friends among the local clergy, and they were quickly dispossessed of their lands and lives by the new emperor. The wheel of fortune had turned, and the Jesuits, once welcomed and favoured, now found themselves hunted and condemned.

In describing his own experiences Lobo always provides the key specific details which bring a scene to life. For example, his wary acceptance of being bled by the neighbourhood healer is both frightening and funny:

The functionary came into the house where I was lying in bed and had with him the following instruments he had brought for the purpose of bleeding me: a half of a brick in his hand, a rusty knife half-cut away with large gaps in the edge of the blade, and three points of horns, each one half a palm in length. The Muslim was old, crippled, poor and in tatters, apparently blind in one eye. Seeing such an apparition, I asked him what he had come for. He answered that he had come to draw blood from me, and in truth, although the instruments were as I have depicted them and worse, they were sufficient for the purpose. And I certainly supposed that since the knife was so ineffective, he was bringing the brick to hit it with when he wanted to gouge me with it wherever it pleased him.

Lobo's recovery was complete — perhaps a result, he suggests playfully, of the ailment having been "frightened away by such a doctor and such a cure".

But the humour is rare. The self-portrait that emerges from these pages is of a discerning and precise relater of events, an almost fearless man who is selected again and again by his superiors and by his fellows to undertake the dangerous or delicate mission, to treat with natives whose language he best understands, or to lead his near-mutinous fellow voyagers back from shipwreck. When an emissary is required to plead the case for the missions at

Madrid and at Rome, it is Lobo who goes. His learning, his facility with languages, his sturdy faith seem typical of the Jesuit travellers who ventured into China, India and the Americas and recorded their experiences. His acuity, courage, and willingness to risk his life are measures of the man himself. To the king of Cancali, whose people had been forbidden to sell food to the Jesuits, Lobo protested that "the proclamation . . . was a clear intent to kill us" and

that if this were his intention, our throats were there, for it were better to finish us with one blow than with many because in this way he was giving us a death both long-lasting and cruel. I rose to my feet at this point and offered my throat to him. The king was taken aback, partly because of the unusualness of the offer, partly by the resoluteness of it, partly because the blame for all this was shown to be his.

The passage epitomizes for a reader the weaknesses and strengths of Lobo: the prose is pedestrian and deflating, the analysis shrewd, and the gesture itself quite magnificent.

Dorothy Carrington's *Granite Island: A Portrait of Corsica*, which has now been reissued in paperback (336pp, Penguin. £3.95; 0 14 009524 1), blends personal descriptions of the island and its inhabitants with accounts of its history, art and folklore, supplemented by notes, bibliography and a historical summary.

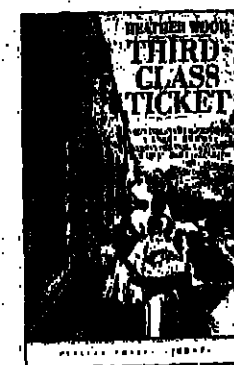
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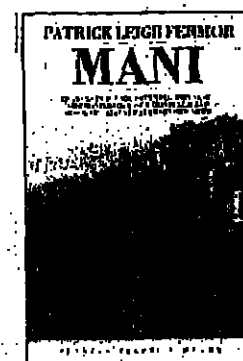
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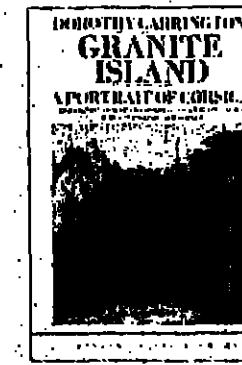
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COMMENTARY

False perspectives

David Nokes

DAVID GARRICK and GEORGE COLMAN
The Clandestine Marriage
Albany Theatre

In their prologue to the original production of *The Clandestine Marriage* in 1766, Garrick and Colman claimed Hogarth's satirical *Marriage à la Mode* series of paintings as their source and inspiration. However, the sense of direction in Hogarth's six pictures is unmistakable as he illustrates the dire consequences of a mercenary misalliance between a city flit and a game some poor, charting their downward progress through adultery, debt and syphilis to murder and suicide. No such sinister dangers menace the felicity of the young people in *The Clandestine Marriage*. We are reassured in the opening scene that the love-match between the merchant Sterling's daughter Fanny and her impecunious suitor Lovewell has already been secretly solemnized. The plot, if one may call it such, is merely a conceit by which their marriage is kept a secret, thereby allowing the rest of the characters to chase each other round in circles before arriving back at the point from which they started. As Melvil, an aristocratic young rival for Fanny's hand, observes in the final scene, if Lovewell had only behaved "a little more openly" they would all have been spared "a great deal of uneasiness".

Garrick and Colman exploit the prolonged crabwise manoeuvres towards a marriage set-

tlement between the *nouveau-riche* Sterling and the faded aristocrats Melvil and Ogleby as the pretext for a series of contrasts of styles, manners and fashions. Yet this production does little to explore the more interesting satirical potential in the characters. The merchant Sterling, neatly poised between twin obsessions, is on the one hand greedily preoccupied with his profits from his trade in currants, soap, spices, Madeira wine and daughters. On the other, he is anxious to play the country-gentleman, laying out vast sums on improvements to his estate, levelling forests to form a *parterre*, creating avenues and canals, raising steeples, erecting statues, ordering brand-new ruins and turning his brew-house into a pinery. Hard-headed in business, he is a neophyte in matters of taste, and his balance-sheets are as accurate a record of eighteenth-century fashions as a volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. In this production Roy Kinnear buffets his way through the part with an engagingly artless comic performance that finds more laughs in winks, grins and grimaces than in the resources of the text. Similarly Anthony Quayle, as Lord Ogleby, resists giving any satirical force to his performance, presenting his lordship not as a grotesque and senile lecher, but as a misguided doddler whose natural benignity keeps breaking through his mask of cynicism. While Quayle totters and splutters in harmless infatuation, Joyce Redman as Sterling's sister Heidelberg struts and swoops in an alarming manner. Rouged and plumed like an exotic bird, this forerunner of Mrs Malaprop does not

so much mis-represent the meanings of her words as misplace them somewhere between her tongue and giant molars. Hers is a startling performance of teeth and smirks, but the cumulative effect of these performances is to produce a comedy of mannerisms, rather than of manners. The stock nature of the comic effects is compounded by the inclusion of a funny foreigner – in this case a Swiss valet – and of a clutch of vulpine lawyers, cheerfully hanging wretches as they dine.

For all the conventionality of its plot and characters, *The Clandestine Marriage* is far from unredeemable, but a successful production would require more inventiveness and flair than the present one. A more thoughtful set, for example, might present the various aspects of Sterling's estate, described in detail in the text, as a series of metaphors for the false perspectives, contradictions and *culs-de-sac* of the plot. What appears as a distant church steeple is in fact, Sterling confesses, merely a folly, built against a tree to terminate the prospect "according to the rules of taste". And the elegant "crinkum-crankums" of his serpentine maze remind Lord Ogleby of nothing so much as the mean parcels of land in the City, of "window-pots in Gracechurch Street". Tanya Moisewitch has settled for a boxed-in compromise set, with a brown interior flanked by topiary hedges, traditional and functional, but in no way contributing to an interpretation of the play. On the present evidence Anthony Quayle's new Compass company will need to steer a more decisive course.



An engraving of a plague doctor, from Filippo Mastero's *Il più temuto de' mali, la peste* (1722), reproduced in *The Dark Side of the Enlightenment* by F. Thomas Noonan (1979, Harvard University Library), the catalogue of an exhibition on the themes of eighteenth-century *famille*, plague and war, held on the occasion of the fifteenth annual meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

More Gothic than Greek

Peter Kemp

The South Bank Show: Ivy Compton-Burnett
LWT

Despite the piously funeral tones of Melvyn Bragg, *The South Bank Show's* commemoration of Ivy Compton-Burnett's centenary rapidly degenerated into something reminiscent of vandalism in a graveyard. The grislier morsels of her biography were exhumed; the starker bits of a novel wrenched out of context and strewn around for crude shock effect.

Initially, though, the programme's format – an account of Ivy Compton-Burnett's life and work intercut with dramatized extracts from one of her books – looked promising. With the recent completion of Hilary Spurling's biography of the author, the facts needed to display the connection between the life and literature are copiously and entertainingly available. *Elders and Betters*, the novel chosen for adaptation, shows Ivy Compton-Burnett at her best. It is, Melvyn Bragg suggested, "the bleakest" of her books (partly because it was written during the Second World War). It also contains some of her most toughly witty dialogue and most acute psychological probing.

In the event, the biographical facts sometimes got scrambled. It's untrue, for instance, that Ivy's brother Noel was "the only person she'd ever really loved". She seems to have been even more attached to her older brother Guy, who also died young. The loss of both of them was, she often said, a crushing double bereavement: "Them both dying like that quite smashed my life up." On the subject of the fiction too, Bragg could be misleading – as when he stated that it observes "the conventions of the nineteenth-century novel", one of which is concentration on an "enclosed world". It's hard to think of anything less enclosed than the world of the typical nineteenth-century novel. And, in any case, Compton-Burnett's fiction is far more crucially influenced by the Greek drama she studied while at Royal Holloway College – incorporating its motifs (tyranny, incest, infanticide) and methods (commenting chorus, stichomythia, near-unity of place) into her books. Stripped down to terse dialogue and curt authorial summaries of key events and characters' appearances, her fiction is virtually drama.

Despite this – and the fact that in Gwen Watford and Faith Brook it had actresses powerfully suited to the parts they played –

Jack Bond's film version could hardly have done less justice to *Elders and Betters*. On drawback was its gaping omissions. With its family drastically pruned of many of its members, the sense of claustrophobic human distress, physical and emotional oppression, that characterizes the fiction was dissipated. In removal of the servants lopped away another vital dimension (and one containing the book's funniest scenes). Also discarded were integral chunks of the surviving characters. Most of those appearing on the screen were skeletal effigies of those in the books. Anna Domme, the central figure, was a travesty. Supposedly a dwarfish, ungainly creature, coarsely headed, and full of jarring gracelessness, she was presented as a sweet-voiced, statuesque dark beauty. Her character was prettified to obscure an issue basic to the book: the total antagonism between Anna's unprincipled insensitivity and her aunt's over-sensitive moral conscientiousness. Muffling the novel's greatness, Bond's film bowdlerized Anna's expounding of her victory over her aunt by murdering the woman's grief-stricken son, thus bounding her to suicide.

Such authentically disturbing elements were jettisoned to make room for a jumble of spate shocks. The home where most of the action occurs was refurbished into something resembling the House of Usher. Dead leaves strewn the rooms; vegetation had a strange hold upon the banisters; ravens scuttled on the dining-room table. "The most typical scene in any Ivy Compton-Burnett novel is meat-pie," Melvyn Bragg solemnly explained – while, on the screen, squirming tibits were tossed across the mahogany into peckish birds' beaks. As the action leaped-frogged from one grand guignol climax to the next, the interior décor – skulls, a statue of Pan – dripped blood, while in the grounds a frenzied grave-digger worked overtime. This indulgence in the kind of Gothic usually associated with the later Victorian Russell was presumably intended to signal the primeval forces were at work behind the Victorian facade – just as the eruption into the action of a defunct Tommy and two girls waiting in winding-sheets intimidated garishly that the novel was exorcizing memories of some of Ivy's dead siblings. It's true, of course, that these novels, savage impulses and "autobiographical Angst" push against the rigid constraints of social and fictional conventions. But, in having torn away all such restraining fixtures from the work, Bond lost the subtlety and left himself with a flaccid flop.

Model destinations

Susan Sontag

Books about travel to exotic places have always opposed an "us" to a "them". And this is a relation that yields only a limited number of appraisals. Most classical and medieval travel literature is of the "us good, them bad" – typically, "us good, them horrid" – variety. To be foreign was to be anomalous, often represented as physical anomaly; and the persistence of those accounts of monstrous peoples, of "men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders" (Othello's winning tale), of anthropophagi, Cyclops, and the like illustrates to us the astonishing gullibility of past ages. But even this gullibility had its limits. A Christian culture could more easily believe in the existence of the monstrous than of the perfect or near perfect. Thus, while the kingdoms of freaks appear century after century on maps, exemplary races figure mostly in books of travel to utopia – that is, nowhere.

Not until the eighteenth century are there many examples of a more daring geography: literature about model societies that describes purportedly real places. Documentary literature and fiction were, of course, closely related in the eighteenth century, with non-fiction narratives in the first person an important model for the novel. It is the heyday of travel hoaxes, as well as of fiction in the form of travel books. And the greatest of the imaginary voyages, *Gulliver's Travels*, mixes the two main fantasies of the wholly alien. Consisting mostly of visits to a series of monstrous races, it ends with its burnt-out hero settled among an ideal race: a high moment in the soon to be flourishing "us bad, them good" tradition.

The travel literature that can be understood as premodern takes for granted the contrast between the traveller's society and those societies defined as anomalous, barbaric, backward, odd. To speak in the persona of the traveller, a professional (or even amateur) observer, was to speak for civilization; no premodern travellers thought of themselves as the barbarians. Modern travel literature starts when civilization becomes a critical as well as a self-evident notion – that is, when it is no longer so clear who is civilized and who is not.

Travel is a didactic fantasy in the discourse of the *philosophes* (the first intellectuals in the modern sense), who often invoke distant non-European societies, described either as more "natural" or more "rational", in order to underline the evils of their own. Tales of physical anomaly attested to by voyagers to remote lands still circulate in the late eighteenth century – the nine-foot-tall giants of Patagonia, for example – but the sense of anomaly is increasingly the moral one. And "we" become the moral defectives. There is a large literature of journeys to exotic places, whose fanciful virtues are recounted to point an instructive contrast with Europe. The journey was out of civilization – the present – to something better: the past or the future.

America was the beneficiary of many trips, real and fabricated, of this sort. "In the beginning," said John Locke, "all the world was America." Crèvecoeur and Chateaubriand found in the New World something better than, uncorrupted by, civilization; health, vigour, moral integrity, a refreshing naïveté and directness. After such fantasies came the inevitable counter-literature, that of the acerbic British travellers of the mid-nineteenth century, like Mrs Trollope and Dickens, who simply found us not very civilized, in a word, vulgar. Harriet Martineau in the 1830s, sensing abolitionism and feminism on the march, had liked us rather better. Much of modern judgments about exotic places is reactive. Turks were one of the model races in the eighteenth century; in the 1850s the intrepid Martineau actually visited two examples of the "Turkish" harem and described its inmates as the most injured, depressed and corrupted human beings she had ever seen.

Although these travel judgments – the idealizing of an exotic society, and the report on its barbarity – seem to alternate in cycles of hope and disillusionment, certain countries (following the mysterious laws of stereotyping) have proved more susceptible to idealizing than others. China has been a fantasy kingdom since Marco Polo's visit; and in the eighteenth

century it was widely believed that in China, a land of reason, there was neither war, debauchery, ignorance, superstition nor widespread illnesses. America, too, for all its denigrators, keeps recurring as an object of idealization. In contrast, Russia is a land whose customs and energies have been perennially deplored. Since Ivan the Terrible, the first Muscovite monarch to capture the imagination of Europe, reports on the infamy of Russian society have constituted a flourishing branch of travel literature in the West. The only memorable counter-reports – those made by some foreign visitors from the 1930s to the 1950s, precisely the period of the Greatest Terror, about the unprecedented heights of freedom and justice attained in the Soviet Union – have only strengthened this tradition.

One cannot imagine anyone being exactly disillusioned by the Marquis de Custine's account of the barbarism and despotism he found when he went to Russia in 1839, as many people were sharply disillusioned by Simon Leys's account, in the mid-1970s, of the barbarism of China's Cultural Revolution. And this centuries-old propensity to think the best of China and the worst of Russian society still has its echo today, when, though by any criteria Chinese communism is infinitely more repressive, more (literally) totalitarian than Soviet communism, the Chinese version still enjoys a far better press than the Soviet one. (Indeed, most self-righteous communists at the highest reaches of the American foreign policy establishment behave as if they are not supposed to notice the tragically Stalinist character of current Chinese political life.) Some countries are perennial objects of fantasy.

The *philosophes* had attributed ideal virtues not only to a Noble Savage – the Hurons of Voltaire and Rousseau, Diderot's wise old Tahitian – but also to existing non-European ("Eastern") peoples such as Turks, Persians and Chinese. The fantasies of succeeding generations of writers were not so easily discredited. The only "ideal" civilization allowed by the Romantic poets was a thoroughly dead one: the Greeks.

Once travel was itself an anomalous activity. The Romantics construed the self as essentially a traveller – a questing, homeless self whose standards derive from, whose true citizenship is of, a place that does not exist at all or yet, or no longer exists; one consciously understood as an ideal, opposed to something real. It is understood that the journey is unending, and the destination, therefore, negotiable. To travel becomes the very condition of modern consciousness, of a modern view of the world – the acting out of longing or dismay. On this view everyone is, potentially, a traveller.

The generalizing of travel results in a new genre of travel writing: the literature of disappointment, which from now on will rival the literature of idealization. Europeans visited America, prospecting the possibilities of a new, simpler life; cultivated Americans journeyed to Europe to appraise the Old World sources of civilizations – both often profess to be disappointed. From the early nineteenth century on, European letters resound with the sentiment of being *Europamüde*, tired of Europe. Travellers continue, in ever larger numbers, to make trips to exotic, non-Western lands, which seem to answer to some of the old stereotypes: that simpler society, where faith is pure, nature unspoiled, discontent (and its civilization) unknown. But paradise is always being lost. One of the recurrent themes of modern travel narratives is the deprivations of the modern; the loss of the past; the report on a society's decline. The nineteenth-century travellers are noting the inroads in the idyllic life in, say, the South Seas made by the modern money-economy; for travellers who would never dream of living like the natives generally still want the natives to stay wholesome, rustic, sexy and uncomfortable.

In one characteristic modern incitement to travel, what makes a country worth seeing – and describing – is that a revolution has taken place in it. That most unromantic and profound of travel writers, Alexis de Tocqueville, saw in America the vanguard of a radical process soon to transform Europe as well, irrevocably destroying the past; it was to examine that revolution – democracy – that Tocqueville

travelled about the United States. Trips to countries to see how they have been transformed by a revolution, a revolution which claims to be about the enactment of ideals, have been one of the great subjects of modern travel literature: in the twentieth century these are trips to specific revolutions, seeking that ideal homeland, revolution-in-general. Much of the literature of travel from the "West" to communist countries reads as a late variant of the old genre, in which visitors from corrupt, over-sophisticated Europe hail the healthy energies of a "new world" – now a self-designated "new man".

In this version of the ideal destination, "revolutionary" has replaced "primitive" but still retains many of the attributes of what was once understood as primitive. "I have seen the future and it works", notoriously declared Lincoln Steffens after his visit to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s – perhaps the highpoint of identifying communism with modernization. But as the Soviet model was discredited, and revolution became the fate of struggling agrarian societies more or less under siege, it seemed that what the travellers really felt was: I have seen the past and it is . . . moving. Trips to those grievously poor countries are perceived as a trip backward in time: leaving affluent, doubt-stricken civilization for the simplicities, pieties and materially spartan life of an earlier age. Writing of her visit to China in 1973, Barbara Wooten avowed: "to anyone coming from a world which threatens to strangle itself in its own complications it is the apparent simplicity of Chinese life which makes an irresistible appeal". This reaction is not just fantasy. Communist revolutions not only tend to occur in peasant societies but, for all the energy devoted to bringing about a certain modernization, to preserve tenaciously much that is premodern in them, such as old-fashioned family life and the central role of a literary culture; and to abort or at least slow down – in part due to the intractable failures of the economy – the onset of the consumer society, with its affluence, its "permissive" values and degraded mass culture. Even the unfortunate countries of Central Europe (now paradigmatically relocated in the "East"), though hardly backward societies when they fell under Russian hegemony, are not exceptions to the rule of delayed advance into the modern which communism enforces; and still visibly preserve more of Europe before the Second World War than do the countries of Western Europe. A good deal of the favourable reaction of foreign visitors has been precisely to this.

In virtually all accounts of modern reflective travel, the master subject is alienation itself. The trip may support a sceptical, acutely sensuous, or speculative view of the world. Or the trip is an exercise in overcoming alienation, in which travellers celebrate virtues – or liberties – found in a distant society that are lacking in their own. In another trip that has become common with the enlarging possibilities of travel to non-European countries, the affluent traveller, on vacation from bourgeois restraints, explores the "picturesque", takes advantage of unlimited sexual opportunities. One celebrated nineteenth-century example is the trip that Flaubert, in the company of Maxime du Camp, made to Egypt in 1850–51. (In the twentieth century, homosexual writers have been specialists in this kind of libertine travel to colonies and ex-colonies.) In the trip to the revolution, another kind of picturesque is in evidence. Part of what is perceived in communist countries as old-fashioned is the sexual decorousness. Untrammelled sexuality is now associated not with the primitive but with decadence. The revolution represents itself as a kingdom of virtue, and visitors have been ready to believe that behaviour in a revolutionary society really has been thus transformed. In the early 1970s many Western visitors accepted the solemn assurances of their Chinese hosts that there was no theft, no homosexuality, no pre-marital sex in China. Though travel for debauch is the opposite of the high-minded, edifying trip made to a poor country in the throes of a revolution, the latter trip often inspires similar condescensions and detachments. Sympathetic visitors who cannot even imagine the local hardships often have a high standard of revolutionary consciousness, and when, for example, the ghastly rigours and lethal zealotry of Chinese communism in the time of the Cultural Revolution were somewhat abated, starting in the mid-1970s, first-time visitors were known to commiserate with each other that they had missed the really good period, when the natives were pure, pious, uncorrupted by consumerism.

Many of the earlier travellers to the capitals of the revolution were, as in an old-fashioned literary journey, going to an exotic land in order to return home and write about it. Travellers to these countries were conscious of traversing a formidable barrier. (Beyond the Great Wall. Behind the Iron Curtain.) They came to write about an exotic country; what they actually wrote about was their itinerary, the strenuous programme that is laid out for privileged visitors. Indeed, the common form of these books was the record of the trip, as in *China Day by Day*, the notably ingenious book Simone de Beauvoir wrote after her trip to China in 1955. By the early 1970s, with an increasing volume of travel to China, travellers were reporting not only the same form of trip but the identical one – the same tea-growing commune near Hangejow, the same bicycle factory in Shanghai, the same "lune committee" in a Peking neighbourhood; the sameness of the trip having not deterred a large number of them from coming back and writing virtually the same book. Isolated, secretive, besieged – all communist countries have elaborate procedures for receiving foreign visitors, pampering them while putting them through some well-chosen paces, then dispatching them back, laden with trinkets and books, to the outside world. Like the most modern tourist venture in any remote land, the experience in which the traveller to the revolution is enrolled eliminates all risk, denies enigma. It was rare for such travellers ever to confess themselves baffled; to regard the country as genuinely mysterious. Mystery, risk and unpleasantness, isolation are traditional ingredients of travel to remote lands. Even the most independent lone observer needs help in deciphering an exotic country. Such an observer may take on a native cicerone, who will be the traveller's principal interlocutor for part of the trip – as in V. S. Naipaul's *Among the Believers*, about his travels in revolution-convulsed Islam – though the lone observer is unlikely to take at face value the attitudes of this native friend. But travel to a communist revolution often had a quite different result. These were trips organized by travel officials, for the hopeful or merely complaisant traveller, to make the country seem intelligible. Both complacency and hope invariably lead the traveller to underestimate what is complex in the society, to mistake what is different and what is similar. Thus, many visitors to communist countries have been easily persuaded to consider the aspirations and needs of their inhabitants to be fundamentally different from ours, when they are all too similar, and institutions and practices to be comparable to our own which are, in fact, radically different.

The voyage to be made to new worlds used to be arduous, hazardous; so arduous that travellers often skipped it. Many authors of travel books were fireside travellers, plagiarizing earlier travel accounts. That eventually travel to exotic places became altogether common, and more and more organized, has made the old kind of travel hoax virtually obsolete: people do take the trips they write about. In the modern period there are probably many fewer travel books that consciously intend to deceive, more in which the author is deceived. The chances of being caught out, of course, have also mounted. No Natchez squaw arrived in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century to explain what Chateaubriand hadn't seen or had misinterpreted in the course of his enthusiastic (and, in part, faked) travels to America in 1791. But someone – her name is Ellenor Lipper – who served eleven years in the Gulag and was a prisoner in that slave labour camp in Siberia that both Henry Wallace and Owen Lattimore visited in the early 1940s and pronounced a model workplace (a cross between the Hudson Bay Company and the Tennessee Valley Authority) did turn up a few years later, and wrote about the rage and contempt, the prisoners felt for their visitors.

The accounts of the travel to exotic countries in the nineteenth century suppressed the servants, often a whole retinue, who accompanied the venturesome traveller. The modern traveller touring the revolution tended to suppress the group with which such a trip was accomplished. The sort of person who writes a book about travel to a communist country is, more often than not, the sort who gets invited. And this usually means being a member of a tour – an educational (that is, propaganda) tour sponsored and often paid for by the country being visited. As in all tours, one may not know some or even any of the other people with whom one is packaged. The group may be as small as three (my case on my first trip to North Vietnam, in April 1968) or five (as when I went to Poland, in April 1980) or eight (the size of the group I joined to go to China in 1981). Groups of forty in general mean students; the eminent rarely travel in groups of more than five or six: those considered top-drawer celebrities will be invited to travel with a spouse or companion. And, if it is a first trip to a communist country, one will be surprised to learn that this group – however small, however *ad hoc* – is called a “delegation”. You

DERVLA MURPHY and PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR are two of the selected Writers on Travel for the current promotion

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Dervla Murphy's latest book is

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A Taste of China

"Although the lone traveller is not encouraged in China, James Ballingall was able to make his way by boat, bus, train and on foot to parts of the country which have long remained a mystery to the Western World. He conveys with infectious enthusiasm and excitement his impressions of this enigmatic country and paints a vivid picture of the people in their struggle to pull themselves into the twentieth century." *Illustrated £9.95*

JOHN MURRAY

may protest that your group represents nobody back home, that each member speaks only for herself or himself, but your smiling hosts will keep on referring to "your delegation".

The custom is for all those taking part in the trip to rendezvous in a hotel mid-journey on the way "in", the day before entering the country, to be instructed in the ground rules of delegation travel, and to elect a "chairman" (sometimes a vice-chairman as well) for the trip, who will have the duty of responding to official speeches and gets to sit at the head table of banquets and lead off the toasts. (Some delegations choose to rotate the chairmanship for different segments of the trip, to share the pompousness and the fun.) Wherever you go – at railway stations, where they meet your train; in factories; in schools; at the Writers' Union – your delegation is meeting the representatives of their organization.

No invitation without an inviting – host – organization; no travel without a programme. Led from museums to model kindergartens to the birthplace of the country's most famous composer or poet; welcomed and given tea and phoney statistics by dignitaries in factories and communes; shepherded from oversized meal to oversized meal, with time off for shopping sprees in stores reserved for foreigners, the travellers will complete the tightly-scheduled trip having talked with hardly anyone except each other and the only natives they spend time with, upon whom they will base many a generalization: the inveterately amiable guides assigned to the delegation. These official companions – apart from a few head hacks, they are often young, warm-hearted, eager (they have worked hard to get the coveted, thrilling job that puts them in contact with foreigners), and

scared (they know the price of a mis-step, an indiscretion) – hover and fuss, at the constant disposal of their charges. One is always busy, accompanied by them. They are even busier. During an after-lunch break, they have to arrange tickets and accommodations; up late at night, they will be writing reports on the day's activities and the visitors' reactions, planning activities to come. The tourist's role is, characteristically, a greedy one. But a delegation tour of a communist country tenders an explicit invitation to be selfish, greedy. The visitor has only to express a wish for some unscheduled excursion or entertainment, and more phone calls are made to the people working behind the scenes to conjure up the necessary tickets, a guide on the spot, another limousine.

Educational travel is by definition privileged travel – travel on a round-trip ticket. One model of travel to foreign countries for the sake of education was the eighteenth-century Grand Tour, in which a young gentleman, accompanied by his often ill-born and usually underpaid tutor, was exposed to a variety of customs, places, treasures adjacent to his own. Although these leisurely travels through the Continent were often no more than a rake's progress, their educational point could not be altogether nullified. The graduate of the Grand Tour did return home contaminated in some sense by the foreign, having at least experienced that there are many models for being civilized – which is perhaps the beginning of true civilization, and civility.

In the Grand Tour offered to visitors to communist countries, travel is designed to make sure the visitor does not encounter anything contaminating. The precondition of such

tours, or field trips, is the visitor's intellectual and cultural distance, which is reinforced by the mandatory luxuriousness of delegation travel. The Disneyland of revolution which the traveller will see has for its theme the country's progress, the revolution's benefits, as illustrated by an array of elementary performances, both economic and cultural, that visitors are taken to admire. But few visitors from very rich countries, including many who identify with the left, are able to evaluate these performances; if on their first trip to a communist country it is probably the first time most of them will have been in a truck factory, on a breeding ranch, in a paper mill. Most visitors will know nothing about communism, about the country they are visiting (often they have not even taken the time to study a map and seem unaware of the most salient facts of its history); about peasant life and major industrial procedures.

So-called fellow-travellers, whether informed or ignorant, are not the best participants in a delegation trip. Indeed, travel officials in communist countries have learned to distrust Western Leftists and – this is clearer – Richard Nixon's favourite foreign vacation spot, Ronald Reagan's "so-called communist China" – much prefer to entertain travellers untouched by radical sentiments: better a chairman of the board than a Leftist assistant professor of history. Such travellers lead a depart with a much more favourable impression of the country than they had before the trip, partly on the basis of their discovering that it contains many friendly attractive people, and their observing that the exotic streets swam with human beings "just like us".

What had they imagined before they came?

interested in painting.

To be less carping: Luard's notes on history are skillfully interwoven with his narrative; he gives plenty of practical information about such things as forest fires, the collection of cork from cork-oaks, the production of sherry, smuggling and the Moorish legacy (in terms of genes, artefacts and place-names). He writes well about relations with servants and neighbours, the children in the village school. He appreciates the beauty of Baeza and Úbeda and of Charles V's palace in Granada, feels the charm of Puerto de Santa Maria and enjoys the deliciousness of *turrón*. He tells some good anecdotes. I particularly liked the ones about

the baker who signed his own bread, of the English nanny seen striding in to Gibraltar, buy a reliable kipper – and of the huge red deer who charged through a window-pane and landed on Mrs Luard's bed. He has a sense of colour and places: in Granada "water has been employed as a noble building-material of its own"; a fighting bull standing in a meadow "garlands of petals tangled in its horns". I recognize with pleasure the picture of an expert and exhibitionist horseman "deliberately and theatrically... making his horse in turn gallop, canter and piroquette in slow rearing circles" – but not the "dark haunting melancholy" of Cordoba.

The noise! And the people!

Filippo Donini

GUIDO CERONETTI
Un Viaggio in Italia, 1981-1983
290pp. Turin: Einaudi. L. 16,000.

Guido Ceronetti travels through Italy in search of vanished beauty. Italy, for him is "a great piece of wreckage", a "country that has been". "My God, how ugly Italy is!" he exclaims. "Only few, absurd traces of beauty remain"; and he sets out to look for them. But it is difficult search, and instead of beauty he mostly finds vulgarity. "Indecent" villas surrounded by "out-of-place" fir-trees offend his eyes, the traffic noise "skins him alive", rock-and-roll music "drills into his skull", the speed of cars "uproots" him, tourists with their "predatory Kodaks and Leicas", their "terrible craving for excess in everything, shouting, making noise, making filth... sever all contact with reality". People, indeed, seem to be the worst obstacle to the enjoyment of what is left of beauty in Italy. Ceronetti visits Spoleto on a snowy day and finds "a divine silence in the streets. The medieval city seems deserted... All disappeared, at last!" The people Ceronetti dislikes most are the "rumorocra" (or "noise-cra"), young men on motorcycles or with pocket wireless-sets. But he is not a misanthrope; he is capable of greeting people he doesn't know, and is ready to fall in love with a woman sitting at the next table in a Catania restaurant.

Ceronetti's journey is not systematic. The first part of the book starts from Trieste and Padua, moves suddenly to Tuscany, Orta,

Varallo, Piacenza, Mantua, then Turin again, Abruzzo, Apulia, and Sicily. The second part begins with Turin, Genoa and Milan, switches to Vicenza, and then Rome returns to the Po, thence to Venice and Trieste before plunging South to Palermo and Rome. But such leaps are dictated by the associations of ideas, and if the geographical order is topographical, the connections are always logical.

Towards the end of the book, Ceronetti laments (rather contradictorily) that in all his travels among Italian crowds and on Italian trains he has only found empty spaces and "the void": the empty harbours of Trieste and Genoa, empty churches almost everywhere, fields along the Po devoid of human presence, the expensive emptiness of large centres of royal and aristocratic palaces, the desolation of railway waiting-rooms at night. But in fact the preceding 280 pages are far from being a contemplation of the void: they team with anecdotes and descriptions of landscapes, cities, buildings, works of art, graffiti, conversations, digressions about books. And the search for beauty is not fruitless: an ancient garden here, a tiny courtyard with a fountain there, a staircase supported by four slim columns.

His literary digressions are one of the attractions of Ceronetti's work. He is an accomplished translator of Latin poets (Catullus, Martial, Juvenal) and of biblical texts, and his forays into literature are always rewarding. He has his preferences and idiosyncrasies; he likes Manzoni better than Leopardi, he says more things about Puccini, Pascoli and Pirandello but he is full of humour and amusing.

An apostle of the picturesque

Kenneth O. Morgan

M.W. THOMPSON (Editor)
The Journeys of Sir Richard Colt Hoare
through Wales and England 1793-1810
288pp. Gloucester: Alan Sutton. £10.95.
0862990491

The discovery of Wales was an important element in the cultural awareness of eighteenth-century England. It played its part in the dawn of romanticism. Idealized in the landscapes of Richard Wilson, the untamed mountains, rocks and waterfalls of wild Wales helped to direct artistic sensibility towards the magnificence of the sublime and the cult of the picturesque. But, years before Wordsworth caught sight of Tintern, writers as well as painters were crucial to this development. William Gilpin's tour of the Wye valley and elsewhere in south Wales in 1770 extolled the jagged peaks, mists and vaporous light of the Welsh mountain scenery, studded with imposing ruins. Those two intellectual Marcher squires Uvedale Price of Foxley, Herefordshire, and Richard Payne Knight of Newtown, Shropshire, used the Welsh landscape as the pivot for an aesthetic theory which looked back to Poussin and Claude, upheld the irregular "mixed style" in architecture, and celebrated the countryside in its most idealized and primitive form.

Not the least of these observers was Sir Richard Colt Hoare, a wealthy squire from Stourhead in Wiltshire, a Palladian house famous for its library, lake and landscape gardens. Hoare was an incurably active artist and antiquarian, and at a very early stage Wales captured his imagination. Between 1793 and 1813 he spent most of his summers on lengthy tours of the principality, north and south; unlike Gilpin, Hoare found the rugged grandeur of Eryri no less appealing than the gentler contours and greener hues of south Wales. Among the many fruits of his travels was a translation of the work of that earlier traveller, Giraldus Cambrensis, and his *literary* of 1188. Hoare, then, was an interesting figure in intellectual and aesthetic history, one relatively little known. It is excellent, therefore, that Michael Thompson has put together this selection of extracts from Hoare's journals, based on manuscripts housed in the South Glamorgan county library. The book includes ten lengthy passages spanning the period of 1793-1810, covering most parts of Wales from Chepstow to Holyhead, with one solitary excursion in 1800 to view the cathedrals and lakes of Yorkshire and Cumbria. Together with a helpful editor's introduction, a few notes (which might usefully have been expanded) and forty samples of Hoare's illustrations taken from contemporary sketches or prints, this makes an attractive and unusual addition to the literature on travel in pre-industrial Britain.

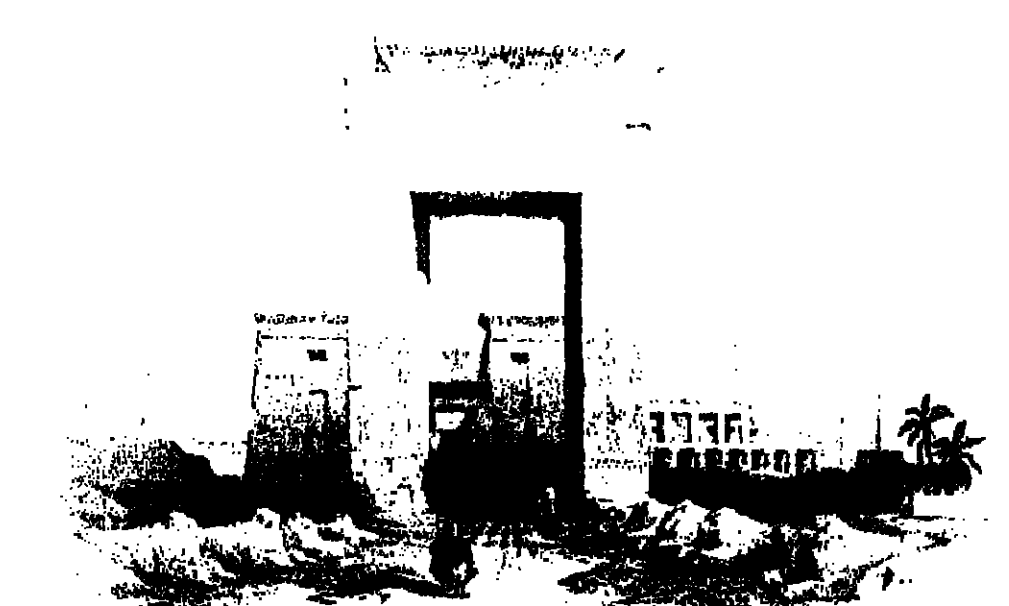
Hoare's tours were well-upholstered affairs. He stayed mostly in comfortable inns and travelled about in his own chaise. Unlike Gilpin before him or Borrow after him, he seldom rode and virtually never walked. His objects in touring Wales were aesthetic, not sociological. He was fascinated by its antiquities, from neolithic chambered tombs to remote Celtic churches. Ancient buildings, preferably in a state of modest decay, located in picturesque settings against a background of crags and waterfalls, were his main concern – abbeys, castles (with Conwy perhaps the favourite), the tombs, memorials and effigies of parish churches. At the same time, unlike those devotees of nature in its purest form, Gilpin and Uvedale Price, Hoare could be excited on occasion by the works of modern man and the dawning of the industrial era. He was stirred by Telford's mighty aqueduct over the Dee at Pontcysyllte, and the blaze of the ironworks at Blaenavon, while the splendours of the Parys mountain copper mine in Anglesey in 1801 left this most communicative of travellers for once at a loss: "as all description would fall short of the singularly romantic and picturesque forms of this mountain I shall not attempt it." Beyond these occasional artefacts, there lay before him a timeless, legendary Wales which he saw as a vast, peaceful, largely unpopulated wilderness of mountains, trees and water. Bala lake in Merioneth, set against the rugged outline of the Aran mountains, made a particu-

lar impression, and he built himself a villa by its shores, from which he pursued his quest for the sublime grandeurs of unknown Wales.

His descriptions of the countryside are constant, if endearing, exercises in hyperbole. The "sublime" held no terrors for him, as it did for Burke. The more rugged the aspect, the more unrestrained Hoare's enthusiasm. Snowdonia is always exciting – "Snowdon reigns as sovereign" – but the mountains around Ffestiniog and Bala, the Cader Idris range, the country by Carreg Cennen in Carmarthenshire, north Cardiganshire around the Johnes house at Hafod ("very grand, and truly Alpine; well-wooded hills, waterfalls, picturesque bridges etc"), and the Brecon Beacons behind Crickhowell also produce lyrical accounts. By contrast, barer, more expansive mountain scenery, with perhaps fewer convenient vantage points for the traveller, are open to mild criticism, just as Hoare favoured the Lake District rather than the Yorkshire Dales in England. Areas of Plynlimon consist of "the most dreary and barren mountains imaginable"; the lovely vale of Clwyd in Denbighshire ("too wide to furnish good subjects for the pencil") is a shade disappointing; the bogs of south Cardiganshire around Tregaron and the rough mountains of Preseli in Pembrokeshire leave him cold. However, these are amply compensated for by the succession of other splendours, especially watery ones. Any lake is instantly appealing (oddly enough, Talyllyn in Merioneth, perhaps the most romantic of them all, he seems to have missed); the cataract at Devil's Bridge is unrivalled in Europe; while he reaches ecstasy in the Teifi valley near Cilgerran in northern Carmarthenshire – "I have never seen ruins more happily combined with rocks, woods and water, a more captivating scene or a more pleasing composition."

Amid a catalogue of abbeys, castles and ancient monuments of all types, modern towns are not ignored. While Aberystwyth is mildly rebuked for its pebbly beach, and Swansea for obliterating its old castle (Hoare should see it now!), Brecon, Carmarthen, Tenby, Dolgellau, Caernarfon and Beaumaris among other towns find Hoare's approval. His enthusiasm is ever quickened by the sense of decay. In Bala, "several cottages are rendered picturesque from their dilapidated state and the grass and other plants sprouting from their thatched roofs", while at Pontypridd the neglect of the great bridge spanning the Taff adds to its charm "by breaking the uniformity of the lines". His journals are truly a hymn of love to a magical, haunting landscape, to which modern Welshmen can equally respond.

The problem is, of course, that Hoare's conception of Wales is totally unreal. To him the land is a vast, empty Zion, like some Indian reservation in Arizona. It is dead antiquities, not a living society, that appeal to him. He meets no people, apart from innkeepers, baggage-men and the occasional visiting English clerical antiquarian. Lake Ogwen in Snowdonia attracts because "no cottage, no pasture, no plot of corn or potatoes, interrupt the savage scenery". If he encounters Welshmen speaking their own unintelligible language, like Methodists back from session in Bala, he offers no comment. It is all very different from the noisy, much-peopled land travelled by George Borrow in the 1850s; artificial though his vision was, too, Hoare's creation is of a beautiful, fictional Celtic twilight, ready for reinvention by Matthew Arnold sixty years on for the amusement of glib Oxford dons. And yet, Hoare, Price, Gilpin and the rest had an indirect effect not intended. Their works helped to inspire a new self-confidence among the Welsh through whose territory they briefly passed. Since others found their land interesting, the national pride of the Welsh was the more stimulated. The artists' vision of Wales kindled a new faith among the Welsh in their literature, their ancient language and cultural heritage. Translated into the idiom of the industrial age, revivalist nonconformity and a literate democracy, this sense of cultural identity turned into a popular awareness of nationality. Out of the dead world of the English antiquarians, a living nation was reborn. But that was civilization removed from the idealized, mythical domain celebrated by Colt Hoare and the gentleman apostles of the picturesque.



The Great Gateway leading to the Temple of Karnak, Thebes, a lithograph from David Roberts's drawing of 1839, reproduced from the book reviewed below.

The artist as adventurer

David Walker

KATHARINE SIM
David Robert R.A. 1796-1864: A biography
350pp. Quartet Books. £18.50.
0704323710

The career of David Roberts is one of the great classics of Victorian self-help, and an appealing one. Born the eldest child of an Edinburgh cobbler, without significant formal training, without any knowledge of the rules of perspective until he discovered them by chance, he made himself one of the greatest of British architectural and topographical artists. His success was not achieved by mere stubborn determination, or even by the generous straightforwardness of his nature, which endeared him to so many, but primarily by his extraordinary powers of concentrated observation; and although he used rule and set square freely, his ever sharp "magic pencil" drew with an exceptional delicacy and suggestiveness which brought not merely admiration but conscious emulation from Ruskin.

Graduating from house-painting to stage scenery, from provincial touring companies to Drury Lane and Covent Garden in the mid-1820s, he learned how to draw the audience into a picture to convey the feeling of being present; and if, as Sir James Caw has remarked, he at times lacked feeling for the natural envelope of light and was not a colourist in any real sense, he well knew how to convey infinite distance, to organize a picture into broad masses and give life and realism to shadows with a subtle play of reflected light. Moreover, in early to mid career his colour was delicate and harmonious enough even if not notably adventurous, its primary purpose being to reinforce the supreme elegance of his draughtsmanship. Although still a theatrical artist until the later 1820s, he early sought the company of other younger artists of promise, joined the infant Society of British Artists and established himself as a successful topographical artist, touring northern France in 1824, Holland and Germany in 1831 and Spain in 1832-33. Here he gained the friendship of the ever-helpful William Penrose Mark at Gibraltar, whose connections enabled him to organize his legendary sketching campaign in Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land in 1838-39. There, dressed as the "tolerable Turk" immortalized by Robert Scott Lauder's portrait, guarded by two Nubian janissaries and armed with an indomitable faith in his capacity to survive biting insects and the treachery of unreliable sheikhs, he penetrated forbidden cities and mosques and embarked on the ultimate hazard of the journey to Petra, his tour culminating in a formal reception at the court of the formidable Muhammad Ali Pasha. His 272 large sketches, panoramas of Cairo, and "3 full sketchbooks" provided material for studio work for decades, bringing royal patronage and an astonishing circle of friends, including Thackeray and Dickens, Charles Barry and the Ruskins as well as his fellow artists Landseer, Eady, and Turner, whose early praise had

helped set him on his way. These highlights of Roberts's career have long been familiar from James Ballantine's *Life* (1866), which was limited by consideration for those then still living, and from the Scottish Arts Council's catalogue *Artist Adventurer: David Roberts 1796-1864* (1981), largely the work of Helen Guitelman, who had transcribed all the surviving material not in the possession of his descendants, the Bicknells. Katharine Sim has now drawn all this material together and amalgamated it with the account of his fellow traveller John Kinnear to produce a full and eminently readable biography which gives not only vivid glimpses of contemporary life in Spain and the Middle East but also of his friends, most notably that of his last visit from Turner. It also reveals the painful background to Roberts's own life, his separation from his wife Margaret, who had taken to drink in her loneliness in London, and of the similar problems of his closest friend, the great Edinburgh decorator David Ramsay Hay. The cloud these events and other trials and recurring tragedies cast over him, coupled with increasing remoteness from the Mediterranean sun, doubtless contributed to the cold and dead blue-blackness and the at times faulty drawing which afflict his last major pictures.

Although the book contains thirty-three good illustrations, nine of them above-average colour plates, Katharine Sim has, perhaps wisely, not attempted much in the way of a critical study of Roberts's art beyond quoting some well-chosen contemporary comment. Her book is essentially for the connoisseur of early nineteenth-century travel. None the less it is helpful for the art historian, providing accurate dates for Roberts's travels, if one can keep track of which year is being referred to after too many pages without a reminder, and details of the circumstances in which his drawings were made. These reveal that some required by his publisher were worked up from sketches by less accurate artists, explaining why some drawings lack the elegance, confidence and feeling for architectural mass which characterizes Roberts at his best. The lack of detailed references is, however, a serious defect in a book drawn from fairly scattered material, as in the absence of background notes on the less familiar of Roberts's friends, Sim is also much less reliable on Scotland than she is on the East, where her previous study of J. L. Burckhardt has stood her in good stead. Old spellings and misspellings, confusions and vaguenesses have not been clarified and have been compounded with statements which are less than accurate, and we are nowhere told that Roberts's one-time paint-boy and biographer Ballantine was Edinburgh's premier stained-glass artist. A little more checking in Scotland would have provided the Playfair-Hay background to Roberts's quite uncharacteristic lack of charity towards William Burn. Despite this, Katharine Sim has produced a most engaging book and left us a great deal the wiser, our appetites whetted for a complete edition of Roberts's letters and journals.

John Murray

A millenarian flavour

Nigel Ryan

COLINTHUBRON
Among the Russians
211pp. Heinemann. £8.95.
0434 779865

Set against Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Hope against Hope*, say, or even the writing of earlier travellers like Fitzroy Maclean, Colin Thubron's book does not seem to provide much new information. But that is not its point. With him one experiences the bewildering and disorienting contrasts of vast loneliness, of cruelty and indifference to human life on a horrifying scale, and of sudden extravagant gusts of personal warmth, generosity and desire to confide: of a deep national melancholia at odds with a fierce patriotism.

If we have heard most of it before we have seldom heard it so elegantly or powerfully put. Among the Russians is not a polemic, nor a history, but the living story of a ten-thousand-mile journey between the Caucasus and the Baltic, illuminated by considerable scholarship and fine writing. Thubron has for tools two of the richest languages on earth: Russian, which he learned in order to gain access to people in aspects that no camera could ever capture; and, to record his experience, an English that is

at times perhaps over-rich for contemporary taste.

The most abiding impression left on Thubron's mind is the magnitude of a country that extends half the way round the globe and contains one-sixth of its land surface.

Everything is planned on a Titan scale: The placeless apartment blocks, the dour ministries, the bullying monuments that have steamrollered the war's ruin in a ferro-concrete tundra that is crushingly shoddy and uniform. Nothing small or different can leak between these sky-thrusting giants. Their size and conformity echo the blind stare of the plains.

In describing Moscow's palaces of bureaucracy — those baleful anonymous architectural big brothers of communism that epitomize the public face of Russia — he reminds us that Russians do not see their buildings aesthetically, but symbolically.

One guide whom Thubron liked showed him the graves commemorating the reality beneath the fearful statistic that one in every four Byelorussians died in the Second World War. Two hundred miles to the east is the site of Katyn where in 1943 the bodies of more than 4,000 Polish army officers murdered in cold blood by the Russians were found. The guide had never heard of the incident and flatly refused to believe that such a thing was possible. "In his astonished eyes I saw the Russians' deep and perennial conviction of their purity;

Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Afghanistan 1979. Neither these nor any other roll-call of their inflicted empire can shake a profound emotional belief in their own rectitude."

Another guide thought Thubron was pulling his leg when he told him that many people in the West were afraid of Russia.

But Thubron also met many in Russia apparently longing to break loose from the bonds that oppress them. In a most moving passage he describes an old Estonian pastor: Suddenly he was shaking. His round eyes winced, and I saw tears shining under the rim of his spectacles. "We shan't meet again, not here." He pointed up the stair. "We'll meet up there." For a moment I thought he was indicating his apartment. He meant Heaven.

One of Thubron's itinerant acquaintances was a trainee doctor called Volodya, with whom he discussed the pleasures of mushroom-gathering. Then came the moment of leave-taking:

Volodya clasped my hand in parting and suddenly said: "Isn't it ridiculous — I mean, propaganda, war. Really I don't understand. If only I were the head of the Politburo and you were the President of the United

States, we'd sign eternal peace at once" — he smiled slyly — "and go mushroom picking together."

I never again equated the Russian system with the Russian people.

But are they so easy to separate? By way of a foreword Thubron quotes Dostoevsky's dictum: "Do you know who are the only God-fearing people on earth, whose duty it is to regenerate and save the world in the name of a new God? . . . the people of Russia." This patriotic sense of destiny may explain a willingness to submit to tyrants, and set Russian apart from the more sceptical and liberal European belief that no system can seriously alter the absurdities of human nature.

At all events a millenarian flavour lingers among the mighty columns of the cathedral in Kiev that Thubron visited, and extracts from him a grudging compliment.

Mme de Staël wrote of the Russians: "In every way there is something gigantic about this people. Ordinary dimensions have no application to them." The extraordinary dimensions come through in *Among the Russians*. It is one of the best — and best written — travel books of recent years.

Misguidedly unmodern

John Ardagh

IAN ROBERTSON
Blue Guide France
923pp, with 60 town plans. A. and C. Black.
£16.95 (paperback £9.95).
0510 001432

Like a set of creaking but majestic old Victorian bathing-machines on a beach of topless trendies, the Blue Guides still trundle their way through the modern tourist scene, sublimely indifferent to changing fashion or the modern world. Originally a London spin-off of the pre-1914 German *Baedekers*, the Guides have been published here for nearly 70 years, and there are now thirty-two of them, from London museums to Leningrad. The latest, this 920-page *France*, breaks new ground in the series, since for the first time it covers in one volume a complex country previously dealt with in five separate ones, most of them out of print for decades. *Paris and Environs* was republished in 1983 and will continue: so this new volume deals only briefly with Paris — but it plods its way in remorseless detail through the rest of France, much of the time in minuscule type (5 or 6 point).

I had better at once declare my interest, for I happen to be author or part-author of several of this book's competitors: Fodor, Shell, one American Express volume (but not Michelin). But this is not why I am harsh with this most inadequate and sloppily-produced guide. It follows the usual Blue Guide formula, dividing France rather confusingly into a very large number of "itineraries": as these are not necessarily the ones a traveller would wish to follow, constant reference must be made to the index. The book gives a wealth of meticulous detail about the contents of museums, cathedrals and other such buildings, and this indeed is its principal merit as a practical *vade mecum*: the tourist in search of these treasures need carry only one volume for all the French provinces, whereas the slim green Michelin guides, though vastly superior in their writing and clarity of presentation, are regional.

The Blue Guide is useful on minor historical detail. It also lists many tens of thousands of lesser sights, all described in deadpan Blue Guide prose (at the other extreme from Fodor's fondness for purple gush). An example: CLAMECY TO CORBIGNY (30km). By turning r. off the Vézère road after 8km, one may follow the 0885 S.E. — At *Thun Merle-Cornic*, with a 13-15C Church, is 2.5km N.E. (views), and *Tanuy* 2.5km S.W., with the fine collegiate church of *St-Léger* (13-16C) and other medieval buildings.

Many really quite important places lie buried amid the trivia, dismissed in a word or two: eg. in the middle of a dense paragraph headed BAPAUME TO AMIENS, we read, "5km N.W., beyond Thiéval, is a memorial to another 73,300 missing" — and that is all the book has to say about one of the most impressive monuments of the First World War battle-

fields. A better guide signals clearly the point of real interest.

While the body of the book is deadpan, various general sections are in pompous officialese. Ian Robertson writes like a retired colonel, very old and very blimpish. On Channel ferries: "Service on board some passenger ferries has deteriorated, more attention being given to the selling of 'bingo' tickets than to the comfort of passengers who are frequently treated like cattle. . . . Those finding conditions unacceptable should complain without compunction to the purser while on board, and on their return by writing to higher authorities. . . ."

Please note, in this and countless other passages, the guide's old-fashioned habit of putting words into italics, bold, quotes or caps. Note too the author's fondness for quoting letters such as Southey or Smollett, to illustrate points about towns he is visiting.

I could forgive him more easily his foibles if he gave the slightest hint of his love of France (assuming this exists) or showed any flicker of enthusiasm for the places he is describing. But the deadpan approach forbids it. The book is full of strange judgments (restaurant prices "tend to be comparatively high") and has some anachronisms. Above all, it has been shockingly sub-edited. Maps appear mis-captioned; hundreds of French names and words are misspelled or wrongly accepted. Even Mitterrand gets spelt without the second "r", whenever his name appears.

The long "historical introduction", though dull, is mostly accurate — apart from the two pages on the twentieth century which are so badly written as to be very misleading, and also show a lack of understanding of the realities of France. Whatever one may think of French Socialists, surely it is grossly unfair to say that, since taking power, like the Bourbons, they have "learnt nothing and forgotten nothing", even their harshest critics today will admit that, since 1981 they have learned remarkable lessons of economic realism.

Above all, Robertson hates modernity in all its forms. He castigates it or, where possible, ignores it. In his 2,500-word chapter on French architecture, the entire twentieth century is dismissed derisively in a short paragraph. Le Corbusier's lovely Ronchamps chapel he writes off in a phrase — "eccentrically designed". The long section on food and restaurants contains virtually no reference to *nouvelle cuisine* which, for better or worse, has so radically altered French gastronomy since the 1960s. A longish chapter on Toulouse has not one word about that city's major modern role in science and aircraft-building and its three big universities; a full page on St-Tropez contains only an indirect hint about its post-war "sophistication". The nudist village at Cap d'Agde, Europe's largest, is not even mentioned — nor, in the section on beaches and bathing, is there any reference to the new French vogue for naturism and toplessness. The *Vacances* machine pulls down its blinds.

A Tudor explorer and his map of Russia

Walter Oakeshott

Sebastian Cabot's final fling in a not altogether successful career — its reputation based on the successes of his father in the service of Henry VIII — was his planning of the voyage made in 1553 in search of a North-East passage to Asia. Always obsessed with the idea of finding "the Moluccas, Tarshish (from which had come rich materials for Solomon's Temple), Cipangu and Cathay", and encouraged in this obsession by the English merchants, whose hopes were more precise — a share in the rich Far Eastern trade monopolized by Spaniards and Portuguese — Cabot was commissioned to plan the project to reach China by way of the Northern Ocean.

The theorists (in Europe the geographer Mercator, in England John Dee who introduced the first English translation of Euclid's *Geometry* in 1570, and was intensely interested in "Cosmography") were strong supporters. But Willoughby's expedition, which sailed in May 1553, was caught in bad weather and his three ships were separated. One was never heard of again. Another, Willoughby's own, took refuge in a lonely bay in Lapland, to winter though the month was only September. The ship was found next year: the crew had been frozen to death — though some had survived till January. The third, commanded by Richard Chancellor, "by chance", as Chancellor says, "found her way into the White Sea", hitherto unknown to Englishmen. He travelled overland, in the winter, to Moscow, where he was generously welcomed. He presented to Ivan the Terrible an elaborate letter (with copies in Latin and Greek) from Edward VI, with which the expedition had been furnished for the benefit of potentates further east. This may have been partly responsible for Chancellor's warm welcome: the beginning of a prosperous trade, not with Cathay, but with the Russians.

The earliest account of the organization of this voyage, by Clement Adams, was printed by Hakluyt in 1598. A group of London merchants (Purchas, Hakluyt's successor, mentions Sir Andrew Judde first among them) had already commissioned Cabot to plan the enterprise, appointed Willoughby as Captain and collected the substantial sum of £6,000, in individual shares of £25, to finance the enterprise. Adams here introduces Henry Sidney, "a noble young gentleman and very much beloved of King Edward" (he was father of Sir Philip Sidney), who became associated with the City group. Sidney proposed to surrender to them someone in his own service, Richard Chancellor, "not because I make little reckoning of the man, or that his maintenance is burdensome and chargeable to me, but that you might conceive and understand my good will and promptitude for the furtherance of this business". Chancellor may have been concerned with Sidney's activities as a ship owner, of which we shall hear in a moment. His suggestion was most valuable. It was Chancellor's ship which survived, and Chancellor's enterprise and imagination made the expedition — in a very different way from that planned by Sebastian Cabot and the theorists — a success.

The story is now taken up in a remarkable document, a fragment of Edward VI's personal diary printed a century later in Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, which touches on the lives of both Sidney and Judde. The impression the King gives of himself is of a clever, somewhat introverted lad (sixteen when he died; the diary covers some four or five years), determined to understand technical, economic and strategic problems. Sidney was his closest friend. The King records Sidney's ownership of a ship "which has been confiscated by the French King". Judde's name has already come up, as one of three who have suffered serious losses (in Judde's case £1,500 of silver) intended for the Mint, "by treason of Englishmen", which may mean through English pirates in the Channel. Judde, knighted as Sheriff (as was then the practice) before he became Lord Mayor in 1552-3, was for years Mayor of the Calais Staple, and Edward's concern for the details of Calais fortifications, into which he twice in the diary goes in unusual detail, and for the recovery of Sidney's ship, must have

brought Judde into direct contact with him. In this context, one entry in the diary is of particular interest. The date seems to be March 1550: "I was banqueting by the Lord Clinton (the Lord Admiral) at Deptford, when I saw the Primrose and Mary Willoughby launched." Judde was recorded as chief owner of the Primrose when she sailed to Russia in 1557 (as also of a smaller ship, the John Evangelist, which in 1557-8 acted as messenger between the main group of merchant ships and England).

Hakluyt does not mention Judde (or any other sponsor) in his report of the Primrose's voyage to Guinea, seeking gold, ivory and pepper, in 1553; but it seems likely that Judde was involved in that also. Like other attempts to enter this particular trade, which encountered violent and increasingly ruthless opposition from the Portuguese and Spanish, who regarded trade with the Africans as their monopoly, it was a failure. The same was happening with the Italians in the Levant trade.

depended? Near the magnetic Pole, he placed the rocky promontory Tabin, which Pliny had described as jutting out of Asia into the northern ocean. Once past it, Pliny believed the explorer would find the coast running south-eastwards down towards China.

In view of the magnetic problems, Mercator was beginning to advise that ships should attempt to approach China by sailing inland up the river Ob. The Searchthrift, a pinnacle not equipped for carrying merchandise but particularly intended for exploration, succeeded in 1556 in passing through the Strait of Vaigatz, and may have actually sailed beyond the river's mouth. But the expedition failed to find it, and returned to the White Sea to winter. There Steven Borough, the elder brother of two remarkable map-makers (his younger brother was with him, though then only sixteen), produced a fine chart of the White Sea coasts, used a few years later by the cartographer Anthony Jenkinson when, after the first of his great

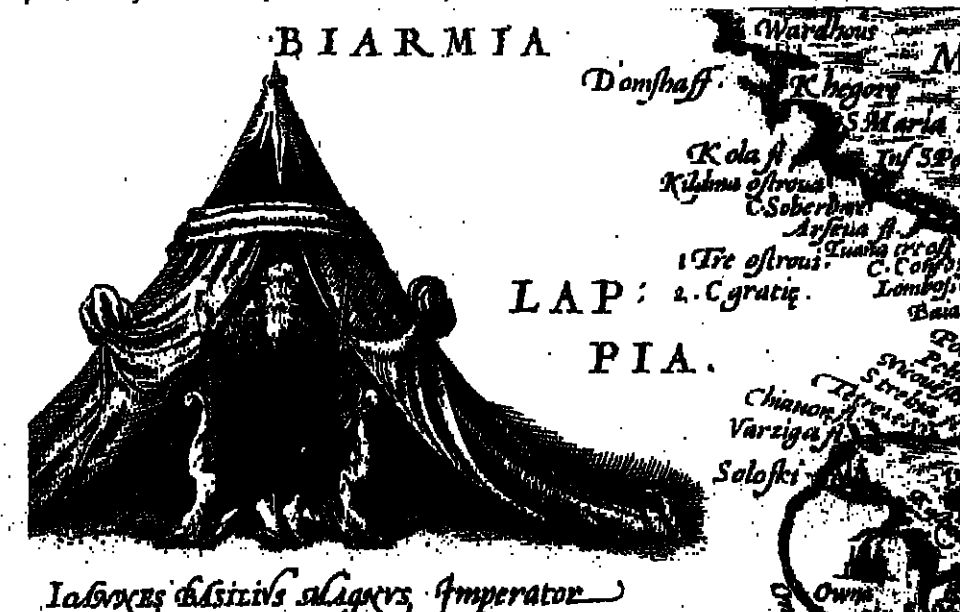
Jenkinson. As a young man, he had become familiar with the Levant and Black Sea region, in a way he recorded for Hakluyt, much later, with a list of the islands and seaports he had visited. In Jean Rotz's atlas made for Henry VIII in 1549 (now available in magnificent facsimile, reviewed in the *TLS*, May 6, 1983) the map of the Mediterranean and Black Sea illustrates strikingly the seaborne trade of that part of the world. Its demonstration of recent discoveries in Central America and the Far East is also fascinating; but the Mediterranean and Black Sea are, as it shows them, the buzzing focus of the world's trade. As his accounts of his later travels show, Jenkinson's experience was at this juncture of enormous importance. Whether it was he, or Sidney to whom he dedicated the map of his first great journey when it appeared in 1562, or the older, vastly experienced Judde, whose work as Mayor of the Staple in Calais made him unusually familiar with the problems of international trade, who revived the great idea of searching out a North-East passage, is uncertain. But his contacts with the Government (and he remained into Elizabeth's reign a close friend of Burleigh), as well as his interest in geography, were undoubtedly invaluable to the Muscovy Company. Because the northern sea route was presenting such difficulties (though Jenkinson himself continued to press for its further exploration), a new plan was needed, and found. Why not explore the possibilities of reaching China by the land route through Central Asia, as the Genoese Niccolò Polo and his son Marco had done two centuries before?

When Jenkinson set out for Russia in 1557, the leading signatory of the general instructions is again Judde. Jenkinson's objective, the overland route to China, is not mentioned, and the form the instructions take shows why: the need for secrecy, because success might mean breaking the Italian-Turkish control of the western end of that Asiatic trade. Much of the Asiatic trade still came, not by the long sea route round Africa, but by the traditional land routes — one of which, further south than the one Jenkinson followed, had already brought silks for Roman ladies at the end of the Republican, and at the beginning of the Imperial period. Eastern goods came through a long series of "middlemen" transactions, from one camel train to the next, and China was known as the land from which silk was brought: indeed, it was known as nothing else to Romans who talked of it (as they did already in the first century AD). Accordingly, Italians must be prevented from having any information about the new venture. After the expedition's instructions for further exploration by sea in those northern waters, sent to their permanent representatives now established in Russia, comes the note: "Also we have sent you one Anthoine Jenkinson, a man well travelled whom we mind to use in further travelling, according to a commission delivered him." Jenkinson is to be "Captain General", in which capacity his overall responsibility is clear. But most interestingly, when Moscow had been reached another Captain appointed by the home authorities, Richard Johnson, is to take over. Nothing is said of what should then occupy Jenkinson.

They left Moscow for Astrakhan, by the long river route along the Volga. Jenkinson having made excellent arrangements with Ivan the Terrible for the English merchants — before he and his associates secured from the Tsar such safe conducts for their own journey as the Tsar was in a position to provide, Jenkinson was already beginning to win the singular confidence that the Tsar would eventually — with one temporary, but serious, interruption — show towards him. Ivan the Terrible had become vividly conscious that his harshness had made him in many quarters unpopular. He began to think that England might prove a useful "bolthole" for him. If that happened, he would need a wife. What about Elizabeth herself, he asked Jenkinson? He was eventually persuaded (it was the beginning of Jenkinson's remarkable second career, as a diplomat) that Elizabeth was not available, and he modified his suggestions: it should be a lady of the nobility, whose appearance must satisfy the Tsar's high standards. "Anthoile" the Tsar called him, in his letters to Elizabeth; and he told her later not to send ambassadors to him unless



Above: Ivan the Terrible, the vignette in the map reproduced on the cover of this issue. Below: Ivan the Terrible, the vignette as it appears in Ortelius's atlas, 1592. All illustrations reproduced by permission of the Curators of the Bodleian Library.



and Hakluyt also gives a formidable list of Englishmen taken as slaves by the Moors, operating from the North African coast.

Finding the good commercial openings everywhere closed to them, the English turned to look for a North-East, or North-West, passage to the Orient. Willoughby's death, and the end of two of his ships, was not yet enough to convince the enthusiasts that the North-East Passage was too difficult; certainly not enough to convince the theorists. Mercator was at this time producing his map of the North Polar regions; aesthetically most beautiful, but entirely theoretical. But he was now also beginning to point out hazards: one of them the possibility that sailing near the magnetic Pole might involve unsuspected risks for passing ships. What would happen to the sails and other metal objects on which their structure

Meanwhile, the leading members of the Company were brewing up another ambitious undertaking: a new scheme for breaking the Far Eastern monopoly. Here the documentation is full, and the leading figure is Anthony

The fence defence

Christopher Booker

ANTHONY BAILEY
Along the Edge of the Forest: An Iron Curtain Journey
332pp. Faber and Faber. Paperback, £4.95.
0571 131956

One does not readily forget one's encounters with that great symbolic barrier which lies across central Europe, dividing "the Free World" from "the Soviet empire". Anyone who has travelled in those parts can summon up memories of watch towers above the trees and huge wire fences snaking across fields, or of looking out of the train window at the frontier while armed guards with dogs peer under every carriage looking for escapees. It is always an emotional experience to be confronted with a border which for forty years has seemed as much psychological as political, even when one is just standing in a peaceful vineyard in the Austrian Burgenland looking down to the reed beds of the shallow Neusiedlersee where exhausted Hungarians staggered across in their hundreds in 1956. It must therefore have seemed a promising idea for Anthony Bailey, an Anglo-American writer in his forties, to travel down the full length of this strange frontier, and to record the experience in a book. Bailey begins on the Baltic, looking over to the deserted sandy beaches of East Germany across waters criss-crossed by patrol boats from either side. As he journeys south in an old Saab, he soon makes us familiar with the look and mechanics of the great divide — the fences, the hedges, the SM-70 mines on posts ready to shower a deadly rain of shrapnel on anyone trying to cross illegally, the East German border guards skulking in the bushes photographing anyone who approaches from the West, staring stonily ahead at any friendly greeting.

Most of his journey was spent talking to people, stopping in inns for an evening meal, trying to find out what it is like to live and work in the perpetual shadow of such a grim dividing presence. The village of Zicherie has been cut

completely in two for nearly four decades; one sees one's neighbours working in their gardens a few hundred yards away, knowing one can never meet them.

There are stories of those who escaped — by balloon, or by swimming underwater, or just by braving the minefields (most successful escapees in recent years have been East German border guards themselves). There is an interlude when Bailey travels by train to Berlin, to look at the Wall and to take a helicopter ride around the even longer boundary which separates West Berlin from the countryside to the west. Then he resumes his journey south, walking in the Harz mountains with a distant view of a Soviet radar station instead of the Brocken Spectre; then on to the somewhat gentler border with Czech Bohemia (the guards here do sometimes acknowledge a "dobry den" — "good morning"). There are other interludes, visiting Prague by air, and the headquarters of Radio Free Europe in Munich (radio waves being the easiest way of all to cross the border). It is interesting to have recollections of their ten years under Soviet rule between 1945 and 1955 from people in northern Austria, the only part of Europe to have "got away" from the Soviet empire.

But then a lengthily described visit to the old Mauthausen concentration camp above the Danube seems to indicate that Bailey recognizes a certain limitation to what he is doing. It is as if he is looking for ways to vary the inevitable repetitions of a journey which is in danger of becoming somewhat banal. For a goodish stretch along the borders with Moravia and Slovakia he seems to have abandoned the actual frontier altogether (what a pity he could not have travelled along the other side — to the old Lichtenstein estates in southern Moravia, say, with their semi-abandoned country houses, follies and hunting lodges, which once provided one of the most haunting glimpses of life on the frontier I have ever had).

After a visit to the transit camp for refugees from the East at Traiskirchen south of Vienna, he resumes his contact with the border in the villages of the Burgenland, and makes a brief foray into Hungary for lunch in Sopron. But then the sense of the Iron Curtain's grim presence fades altogether, as Bailey crosses over, via an agreeable evening drinking home-grown wine in the Alps south of Klagenfurt, into Slovenia. He ends rather vaguely, looking out over the Adriatic in the port of Trieste. It is as if, at the end, his journey has had no real goal, no real purpose. I never felt that he had gone deep enough in trying to understand the resonances of the great divide in the minds of those who live along it — let alone the rest of us. Even its grimness became somewhat dulled by familiarity, and by the end I felt that his travelling had become not so much a great adventure but, rather, a dutiful chore.

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they spoke Russian as Anthonie did. Later, when Jenkinson had returned to England, Ivan became suspicious that he had disregarded these secret instructions. Jenkinson had not – and the Tsar was eventually satisfied on the point; but he had by then found a new Circassian bride, and his idea of an escape to England no longer interested him.

The land route from Bokhara to China had been traversed by the Polos, who had found, east of Bokhara, a generous patron in the able but ruthless Kublai Khan, who had pacified that whole vast region. But, two hundred years later, Jenkinson's first report to the Merchant Adventurers on his return to Moscow in September, 1559, told them that no caravan had got through that way from Bokhara eastwards, for at least three years: "because of the uncessant and continual warres which are in these brutall and wilde countreys, that it is at this present impossible to passe . . .", but assured them that he "had bought of the wares and commodities of those countries, able to assure the principal with profite . . .". It had been an amazing journey. Astrakhan being not almost due south of Moscow, as his map was to suggest, but actually some eight degrees of longitude further east. Jenkinson's party left Moscow on April 23: their river journey ended on July 15. They then set sail, making eastwards, on the Caspian. After considerable problems in the eastern shallows, they left the ship on September 3. From here, the camel train was a thousand beasts; of vital importance through desert country, not only for meat but also for drink – camel's milk – though it reads from Jenkinson's account, as if he and his friends from England depended on the brackish springs that were, often with several days' journey between them, all the desert had to offer. They were twenty days without seeing a sign of human habitation; after this, they passed through country successfully irrigated and impressively productive, and arrived at Bokhara (having half withstood and half paid off one serious attack on the caravan), on December 23. Plans to return through Persia had to be abandoned. They left, to go back the same way, on March 8; reached the Caspian on April 23, and were back in Moscow on September 2.

Only an ill-defined glimpse is given, in the sources, of a *tendresse* Jenkinson may perhaps have had. On his return from Bokhara to Moscow, he ends a letter to Henry Lane in the north, one of the Company's leading agents, "Thus giving you most hearty thanks for my wench Aura Soltana, I commend you to the tuition of God: who send you health with heart's desire"; to which, in the margin, Hakluyt notes: "This was a young Tartar girl which he gave to the Queen afterwarde." In his narrative, Jenkinson mentions a place in the Astrakhan region, devastated by famine, so that (he says) he could have bought "many good Tartar children . . . a boy or a wench for a loaf of bread, worth six pence in England". Did she go all that way with them to Bokhara and sew on their buttons? Or had she perhaps been sent back from Astrakhan for Henry Lane (to take care of her)? She is a forerunner of that remarkable character in American history, Pocahontas, whose arrival in England was to create such a stir a generation later.

After returning to England, Jenkinson settled down for the winter to produce his map of Russia, based on observed latitudes – of which he records a dozen, following the narrative – and the calculated distances of travels eastwards and checked on his return; distances which he could assess only by having himself travelled them. His companion, Richard Johnson, had spent some of his time in Bokhara trying to find information about alternative routes to China. All took the traveller north-eastwards, through Samarkand to Kashgar in Sinkiang; but all involved seemingly endless distances of the most expensive form of travel for merchandise; even if political conditions allowed it; all, that is, except one, a route much further still towards the north – purely mythical, but dreamed up, on the basis of some such world picture as Pliny's, popularized for this region by Mercator.

Meanwhile in London, Judde was dead. Because of his position as Mayor of the Staple he was unfairly blamed for the fall of Calais: a shattering blow, which may have hastened his

death. Thereafter, less is known of the organization of the North Russian trade; and there are no exact instructions for Jenkinson's second journey. While it took place with the blessing of the Merchant Adventurers' Company, the impression left is of his increasing independence. There is a preliminary letter from the Company's London representatives, but it specifically stresses that they do not propose to suggest plans, because he knows so much more than they. The journey to Bokhara had convinced him of the futility of exploring that route further. Lives had been lost in attacks by bandits, and his return with a successful balance in the account was not likely to be repeated. What he planned, now, was to travel into Persia and find whether there were ways of securing a share in that part of the far eastern trade which came into the hands of the Turks and the Venetians in Persia, and passed westwards through the Black Sea or Asia Minor or Syria. As we have seen, he already had first-hand acquaintance, as a young man, with this trade in the Mediterranean.

His route began, again, down the Volga to Astrakhan. Thence it took him along the western coast of the Caspian – a difficult journey, since he brought substantial quantities of merchandise (mainly heavy cloths of English manufacture). Navigation in the Caspian was never easy because of the shallows; and there were no ships large enough to carry the load required. It seems that Jenkinson did not intend to illustrate the new journey with another map, and he gives only three observations of latitude, none precise, though good enough for our (as for his) purpose, since the names of the cities he visited are still well known. He was faced early with an entirely different situation from that farther east: two great powers, Turkey and Persia, bitterly hostile to one another in principle, though both were even more powerfully opposed to Christians. Jenkinson was labelled a "Frank" and, by ill luck for him, the feud between Turkey and Persia had been temporarily, and gruesomely, settled when the Turkish ruler's rebellious son, who had taken refuge with the Persians, was executed and the head sent back to his father as a placatory gift. Reaching Kasvin, Jenkinson notes, "The Turks will not allow us to pass through the country into the Sophy his dominions." But he was a brilliant diplomat, very successful when the devotion of command to those with whom he was negotiating made it possible to treat them, in effect, as locally independent, and he negotiated himself successfully through to the "Sophy" of Persia. Received, at first, with an unpromising reply drawing attention to "the new epoch in Turkish-Persian relations", he persisted; the thread of his argument always the same, that if the Persians would do business with the English, they would find they fared much better than with the Venetians and Turks. Asked if he wanted to go back by the Persian Gulf, where he would have encountered the Portuguese, he said he intended to return through Russia. The commendations he had carried with him from the Tsar had reinforced what must have been the charm of his personality; and this journey was the beginning of a trade (mainly in silks – silk materials, and raw silk – but with other Far Eastern, and some local products, like alum) for some years of great value to the Merchant Adventurers.

It alerted them to the possibilities of the Far East. A generation later, Lancaster's first great voyage to the East Indies – partly practical, like Drake's to America – proved a huge financial success, in spite of soury; and the East India Company, in which Judde's grandson, Sir Thomas Smythe, was to play a leading part, was firmly established; its charter granted by Elizabeth in 1600.

The map

Jenkinson's map appeared in the earliest copies of Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis terrarum* – sometimes described as the "first modern atlas". One page of the double sheet on which the map was printed had on the verso, in type, a descriptive text, as did the other maps in the atlas. But the cartouche dates this one 1562, eight years before Ortelius's atlas appeared. No copy has yet been identified without that text. Accordingly, it has been suggested that Jenkinson's original, produced in 1562, may have been something different, covering (as

has recently been suggested) a much smaller area than that which Ortelius's version covers; perhaps only Russia as it was in Ivan the Terrible's day. In any event, it has been assumed, the 1570 Atlas version was made for Ortelius.

This notion is untenable. The cartouche describes it as the work of Jenkinson himself ("Auctore Antonio Ienkenso Anglo") and published in London. The contents of the map, designed to illustrate one of the most remarkable journeys of overland exploration by an Englishman, place it firmly between Jenkinson's first and second expeditions; the first to Bokhara, in the USSR Uzbekistan; the second into Persia, from Russia, by way of the western Caspian. He left England in 1561 (months before the map's cartouche, with its date, 1562, was engraved) for the second journey, and returned late in 1563. But the outline of the Caspian Sea on the "1562" map makes it certain that this was drawn in 1560–61 – before any information about that second journey was available. Jenkinson's second journey took him down the western coast of the Caspian. His account gives the latitude of what he calls Ardouil (the modern Ardabil), placed by him "four days journey east of Tabriz". He was still to travel south and south-east; so that by 1564 he knew well – what he had not known when the map of Russia was drawn – that the north-south axis of the Caspian was some two and a half times longer than its east-west axis. This major mistake, in the 1562 map, could hardly have been made after the second journey. Ardouil, 38° north, is the last latitude he gives in his account of it. His primary interest has become not geography, but commerce. Moreover, the arguments for this map actually representing the use of the original engraved plate, made for Jenkinson and Sidney in 1562, are to me convincing: in terms both of style and of technique. Ortelius and his engravers adopted a powerful and distinctive style, which comes out strikingly, for example, in one after another of the fine cartouches announcing the maps' subjects and their authors – and for this map (I think uniquely) the name also of the patron, to whom it is dedicated. The "classical" style of this cartouche's frame is as simple as it could be. Most of the rest in Ortelius's atlas have frames imitating elaborate metal structures. The contrast with Jenkinson's hardly needs further underlining. Moreover, Ortelius only very seldom allows vignettes in his maps (though two figures, directly inspired by this map, appear in that of Eastern Asia, made some twenty years later, in Ortelius's workshop, to follow this map). Jenkinson's, covering so many unexplored regions, not only gave opportunities for vignettes, but its empty spaces in the north-east called for them insistently, if it was to be an artistic success. Ortelius allows ships in the seas of his maps, and fine additions they are; but land vignettes hardly ever. He does permit the occasional elephant to appear in Africa, but narrative vignettes, like the several in Jenkinson's map, do not appear in the rest of the atlas. We are reminded of his criticism, even of colouring maps; about which (he said) if his son must have it done, he must arrange it for himself. Ortelius would not be a party to it: the map was a scientific document, not a pretty picture.

Secondly, the comparative weakness of the engraving of Jenkinson's map is noteworthy. The backgrounds on the plate have not been properly cleaned by the engraver. Accordingly, spots are to be seen everywhere, as if it had been peppered over: as is seen, for example, in the background of the two figures standing on the right of the cartouche, and indeed all around the cartouche, and within it. In the early 1590s, the plate was re-engraved (the new engraving following the old with extraordinary accuracy – indeed, there are signs that the old plate itself may have been completely re-engraved) by one of Ortelius's engravers; but if the figures of Ivan the Terrible sitting in his tent are compared in detail in the two versions, the quality of the later version, for instance in the dark shadows in and around the tent, is seen to be comparatively brilliant. So is that of the tent's folds, while the figure itself has come alive. In both these matters, style and technique, the case for reckoning the earlier version as not coming from Ortelius's workshop seems unanswerable. In the art of engraving, the German-Flemish world to which Ortelius be-

longed was leader. England was a laggard. The map is a stranger, in its context in the atlas. To assume, on the other hand, that such details as the vignettes on the eastern side of the map had Jenkinson's own approval, is unjustified. They illustrate travellers' tales about the inhabitants of North Russia. There are no counterparts in the clear, matter-of-fact prose narrative. The single instance (during the second journey) when he recalls the story of a giant in the Caucasus, he dismisses with a phrase that demonstrates his opinion of it. He saw no proof of the map; otherwise he would have exclaimed, "But the Bactrian camel has two humps." Such decorations are the ideas of the English engraver.

A simple explanation of the way in which Sidney came to be involved with the sealing of the map through the press is likely to be right. His early association with Judde and the merchants in the planning of the opening of the White Sea route no doubt led to further meetings with Judde, and later with Jenkinson also, when the idea of his land journey was being thought out – the directions for which were signed by Judde himself. While that journey was happening, Judde died. Sidney's influence in high places was vitally important – even though the young King was now also dead. Jenkinson, as the dedication of the map shows, owed a debt to Sidney. Sidney's interest in cartography became a passion. When appointed Elizabeth's representative in Ireland, he initiated, and played a personal part in, the survey of the province carried out by John Gough. There can surely be little doubt that at the time of Jenkinson's second journey, during which the map of the first was engraved and published, the work was done in Sidney's own household. Sidney himself is thus in a real sense largely responsible for what appears to be the first surviving map by an Englishman to be printed in England. Its dedication to him was well deserved.

Three other candidates must be briefly considered. The map of Spain printed in 1557 for Philip and Mary was shown conclusively by Hind (*English Engravers*: Volume 1; Tudor) to be the work of a Frenchman, Geminus, a fine engraver who worked for many years in England. George Lily's map of the British Isles was printed in Rome in 1545. The earliest mention of Clement Adams's world map seems to be in 1584, when it is said "to be seen in the houses of a number of London merchants". This map was almost certainly made earlier than that; and such a phrase seems to imply circulation in printed form. But Ortelius's failure to mention it, in his very full catalogue of maps and map-makers in copies of his "1570" Atlas – a catalogue considerably enlarged as more and more copies of the atlas appeared – may be significant. It seems possible that he may be referring to this so-called Clement Adams map in his reference to a Sebastian Cabot world map, which, the catalogue says, was printed "seu tabulis" – apparently "from copperplate" – but "without the name of a printer or place of printing". This map of Cabot's may be assumed to date from sometime in the late 1550s, or early 1560s, since it was no doubt designed to illustrate Cabot's view of the possibility of both North-East and North-West passages to China; a view in which we know Clement Adams to have been deeply interested, and to support which he might well have used copies of Cabot's map. Unfortunately here again, no prints are known to have survived; but its absence, under Clement Adams's name, from Ortelius's catalogue is noteworthy. It may be a "ghost"; and Cabot anyhow, if the map in question was his, was not English.

Jenkinson's, then, appears to be the first map by an Englishman, printed in England. That it is not an exceptional rarity (as English sixteenth-century maps "go") is due to Ortelius's inclusion of it, from the very first, in his epoch-making collection.

Harriet Waugh's new translation of *The Travels of Marco Polo* (218pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £12.95. 0 283 98890 8) attempts to produce "an easily readable modern English version" from that in Italian by Maria Bellandi. The book, available also in paperback, is illustrated with line drawings and sixty-four pages of colour photographs by Sergio Stizzi, from the Italian television film *Marco Polo*.

Crafting the contingent

John Bayley

ANTHONY THWAITE
Poems 1953–1983
201pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
043652151 2

It would be agreeable, it might even be useful, to divide modern poets into two classes: those who score by seeming to hit some essential bull's-eye, and those who pull it off by accumulating and crafting the contingent. About the latter it would sometimes be easy to say, as Gertrude Stein said about Oakland: "There's no there there." But this would be misleading, as indeed Gertrude Stein was about Oakland. It is the point about some places and people and poems that there is no there there. Poetry today can be all the more effective by wandering freely in a limbo of experience, instead of being pinned down at its own centre.

The Waste Land should be the contingent poem *par excellence*, but of course it is not: more and more it reveals its essentiality. Pound's *Cantos* on the other hand can seem to grow in potential from lack of definition; truth to experience is never determined by a need to arrive absolutely in terms of form. Pound's debt to Browning is important here, for Browning was the first poet to explore, perhaps involuntarily, the possibilities of poetic language remaining in an area of contingency and drawing strength from it. Browning can be essential too, but his instinct is to spread out into a hinterland not so much of uncertainties or repetitions as of accretions that neither vary nor confirm a pattern. Browning's impressions, like his Dark Tower, have all the cumulative pressure of the indeterminate; even his vehemence has a lack of conviction that finds its echo in modern sensibility, whether scientific, philosophic, or theological.

Anthony Thwaite's poems have much of Browning in them, his spirit as well as his manner and techniques. He is an excellent poet, even an original one, his originality having about it a deliberate sort of blankness which comes from the contrasts he makes between efficiency and mastery of conventional form – lyric, parabolic, and occasionally the sonnet, the haiku, dramatic monologue – and an incommensurate avoidance of finality in the poetic plotting and its upshot. He has artifice without the definitiveness which successful artifice lays on meaning. Valéry announced that "the play of figures" in a poem contains "the reality of the subject". This is not as tautologically true as today's semioticians take for granted.

Still Small

Does your walk have to go in a great circle?
That looks like craving novelty to the last,
Or dreading to revisit a recent past
Which instantly became non-viable

– Whereas to march forward, halt, and swivel round
About three or four steps from the top of the hill
Would show a fantastic strength of will...
And all the excitements of unknown ground

– The greenhouse, the granary – would still be there
For another day. So stop; and turn your face.
There are nicer things to see in the same place
When you travel back, e.g. you are now aware

That those are not gun-toting wildfowlers
Snarling in combat jackets under the trees,
But birdwatchers at their mild observances
Lifting innocuous binoculars

– And the land beyond the hill might obviously
Prove lack-lustre in the end. In the end,
Are the best things always round the next bend?
Might they not be what you passed and failed to see?

Turning back was the interesting thing to do.
You face the sunset with a stronger stride,
The contours surge you homeward like a tide,
The wind in the dark trees is cheering you.

ALAN BROWNING

The play of figures can contain any quantity of implication, but the artifice of a poem can also be used to avoid them, and to avoid the essentiality on which implication depends.

An illustration of Anthony Thwaite's virtuosity in this area would be his poem "Marriages", from *A Portion for Foxes* (1977). At first reading it seems metaphysically neat, a rather showy comparison of animals going one by one to the slaughter ("How dumb before the poleaxe they sink down") with the succession of hearings in a divorce court where each carcass of dead wedlock "is lugged away to fetch its price". But the figure drops dead, like the things it speaks of; the words move away into an imponderable area which arouses fear because the things in it cannot be predicted or defined, either in the poem's action, or in the sequences of living. The carcass image ineffectually conceals a dark drab area where things go wrong for no foreseeable reason.

Hanging there
On glistening hooks, husbands and wives are
trussed:
Silent and broken and made separate

By hungers never known or understood,
By agencies beyond the powers they had,
By actions pumping fear into my blood.
The poem continues to gain strength from its own necessarily incomplete awareness of what it is talking about, an incompleteness both masked and revealed by the violence of the image. Browning, and sometimes Meredith, do much the same thing, revealing not the stylized essence of fear and loss (as Eliot does) but the edge of things where poetry does not conceal inadequacy but effectively colludes with it.

It seems worth suggesting that Thwaite's strengths as a poet lie in the effective use made of indeterminacies, because he has often been compared with Philip Larkin as a poet who whittles predicaments finely, and movingly, into poems. In *A Portion for Foxes* we have the same feeling as in Larkin, of a close and simple relation between the poet's way of life and the poem, just as in Thwaite's first collection, *Home Truths*, perceptions and notings from family life slipped easily into the orbit of the poetry. Neither poet is in the least "confessional", in the sense of making a live dramatic spectacle out of themselves for their poems, but Larkin's do create an essential world, like that of a novelist, while Thwaite's move from one focus of interest to another without making any of them a special preserve.

It is illuminating in this context to compare

Larkin's poem "Elsewhere" with Thwaite's of the same title from *Inscriptions* (1973). Larkin's world is itself essentially an elsewhere, created from romantic traditions grafted on to a personal vision. Thwaite's is a subtle examination of the concept as vaguely uneasy difference between what's going on in your head, and in the rest of the world.
And no elsewhere is here, within your head
Where nothing else is born, or grows, or dies.
Nothing is like this, where the world turns in

And shapes its own alarms, noises, signs,
Its small aggressions and its long wars,
Its withering, its death. Outside, begins
Whatever shape I choose to give it all.

The tone is not unlike Larkin's, but there the resemblance ends. The poetry feels its way through contingency and reveals as it does how complete is the need of some poets – Auden, Larkin – for essentiality. Those poets take over the world, make it in their image, can afford to admit nothing outside it. Contingent poetry, as various in scope and character as Browning's, Pound's, Wallace Stevens's, Donald Davie's, Thwaite's too, scores its peculiar successes by admitting nothing but the outside.

One must not inflate the matter, however, for Thwaite's poetry never does. It sticks to a variety of precise effects and short views.
Truth is partial. Name the parts
But leave the outline vague and blurred.
Mistress of passion, master of arts –

Primitive and professional

George Szirtes

RONALD BOTTRALL
Against a Setting Sun: Poems 1974–1983
160pp. Allison and Busby. £4.95.
085031 5271
CHARLES JOHNSTON
The Irish Lights
77pp. Charles Johnston/The Bodley Head.
£4.50.
0370 30557 4

Has the poetry of Ronald Bottrall been undeservedly overlooked? He is not represented in any of the major anthologies of twentieth-century poetry; most people simply tend to remember him as Leavis's tip for a future that never arrived. This is, of course, unfair. At seventy-eight, and having spent much of his life abroad, Bottrall has been through a prolific period, resulting now in the publication of *Against a Setting Sun*, a selection of the poems he has written over the last ten years, and which includes the bulk of his last book, *Reflections on the Nile*, published four years ago.

The new book is preceded by a loud and angry fanfare from Martin Seymour-Smith, who writes an introduction which combines critical intimidation with name-dropping on so copious and grand a scale that you wonder whether he is trying to suggest greatness by contagion. This is quite an act to follow: the reader must clear the echoes of it from his mind if he is to enjoy the poems. The one valuable lead that Seymour-Smith gives us concerns what he calls the "primitive" aspect of Bottrall's vision: "At all points a considerable sophistication is in process of being resisted . . . the narrative is actually shocking in its simplicity: what looks, initially, like clumsiness, absurdity, triviality, is in fact an innocence of experience." Here then is a verse from the poem to which he specifically refers, "The Ballad of Auntie Mabel":

Auntie was forced by Grannie to refuse, with many
Other suitors, a mining student with a university,
Lidkey by name, he drove a dog-cart with four white
Donkeys, even in those days an unusual sight.
The poem is an extended biography, sprinkled with anecdotal digressions, familiar language, unofficial asides and odd blunt rhymes. In some ways, yes, it is shocking. The manner of the telling in itself is rambling and prosy; and when the strange, isolated "primitive" images, like the one above, appear they seem incidental and unrooted.

Some lines here and elsewhere, however, do strike us as trivial (even in a long term view) or, worse still, merely clichéd: "To ask for more would be too much." You gave me all you had in store / Of passion when our bodies met / (Larkin). She gave birth to a girl, and then

Degrees won from a cheated word.
The skill in *Victorian Voices* (1980) lies in its unobtrusive sharpness of perception, focused not on the poetry but on the voice speaking it – Peacock's daughter to her husband Meredith, Moulton to young Hardy, his friend and pupil – and beyond that to the distance and substance of the personality involved. These poems are dense with unpretentious accuracy, and read even more rewardingly now than when they first appeared. The reply of Meredith's wife to *Modern Love*, written in the same metre, converts the insulating, self-solacing drama of the original into a mild hopeless monologue not even insistent on its own special power to feel, and also cunningly deprives the verse pattern itself of the original's posturing ring and snap. "How strange to be remembered in this way!" is the erring wife's most positive comment.

Forsaken, you set down
A set of tablets permanent as stone,
I was a wisp, a nothing, on my own.
Thwaite's poetry has a sense, implicit with non-poetic charity, of the loneliness of most human experience, its lack of emphasis. This is admirably tuned to the way he writes, and most noticeable when he writes of those things which in Larkin have been devoured and digested into essence – buildings, landscapes, "livings". His images are not so "nutritious", but they stay in the mind and grow on the pages.

a boy / A transient joy / Who was sent to a
charity school in tears. / Norma was too poor to
hope for more, / Abortions followed with the
years / Piercing her like spears ("Norma
Discovered").

Opposed to these are poems of great power or pathos, which often depend on the circumstances of the poet. "Missing", "Westering", "Floods", are deeply felt, economically expressed, occasionally grotesque pieces which well deserve reading. I remain unconvinced by the "primitive" poems: it is possible that some longer perspective may lend them a grandeur that they do not now possess. This is the danger of flirting with the banal in the language of the banal.

Both Bottrall and Charles Johnston are deeply aware of being outsiders in the literary world. Bottrall complains in one poem that "Ultimately it doesn't matter what noise / You make as long as you're one of the boys", while Johnston quips, a little more lightly, "Hullo, hullo, you're not a bard, / You haven't got a union card." Both, too, are men in their seventies who have been writing for some years without much recognition, and who now employ narrative styles and autobiography. The resemblance stops there, for while Bottrall is a lumpy, awkward customer, Johnston is as smooth and civilized as you would expect a practised man of affairs to be. He writes as we might wish to talk, urbanely, wittily, sentimentally. He made a marvellous job of Pushkin and he now gives us an equally brilliant version of Lermontov's unfamiliar poem, "The Tambov Lady". But his latest book, *The Irish Lights*, contains a number of original poems which entertain us no less. His light, authoritative touch does not desert him:

The verbose and slipped informality
Of Lord Westhampton's official telegrams
is a refinement on the pompous. It is meant
to be taken as the style of a Whig magnate
who, between *banquets*, despatches Cabinet boxes,
cutting with slashes of shrewd horse-sense
the knots tied by industrious officials.

This is, essentially, Byron's airy style, and therefore suits the Russians very well. The poetry springs out of mental energy and recollected tranquillity. Johnston writes with great *déjà*, much in the manner of "The Governor of Corvornar" described above: "In English life, / the most adept professionals are those / who put on the best turns as amateurs." To admit that the finest poem here is "The Tambov Lady" is not to belittle the rest of the book. However, uncomfortable as Bottrall can be, there is a quality of struggle in his work which is a salutary antidote to Johnston's charm. These are different worlds (one cannot imagine Bottrall "putting on a turn"): the wind is keener in one than the other. Johnston's is a remarkably enjoyable book, none the less.

John Bayley

Oansome nominatives

Philip Smelt

MARK DANIEL
The Laughing Man
280pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.
07181 24057

The *Laughing Man* is a thoughtful thriller, but the thought tends to weigh down the thrill: in this, his second novel, Mark Daniel plays on a number of tensions. Gavin, the narrator, is a world-weary broadcasting personality, and, perhaps predictably, a *roué* who thought that he was happy "in the first days of London life, the nights of cocaine and cold vodka and desperate, sceptical sex to shut out the dawn". His cousin and childhood friend Patrick, by contrast, is "insufferably hearty". A political agitator, Patrick propounds a version of populist, reactionary nationalism and (to use the sleeve-note's euphemistic reference to an episode in the author's own career) "fell foul of the law". Gavin is drawn back into his cousin's life by some of Patrick's more volatile former political associates, who kidnap him and subject him to a harrowing and humiliating imprisonment. He is rescued and taken to the safety of an Irish farming community, tracked all the while by Niall Scarlett, a sinister "sort of policeman". As the plot opens out, some broader contrast is suggested, between language and nature.

The novel opens with a quote from *Ridley*

Walker: "Thinking on that thing whats in us torn and loan and oansome." Daniel sets his own trap for the anxious philosophizing which his characters indulge in: "The self checks. I must be subject, my world predicate. It is the curse imposed by language. Whatever is nominative is lonely." But the incorrigible Gavin admits that he will "always turn back to words" even after he has said that "There are no words . . . at the core." Patrick doesn't suffer from Gavin's verbal faint-heartedness and, for a man of action who scorns "Word-world", he allows himself some long speeches: "The idea is to keep the language of government out of the people's reach by feeding them scraps. They can label themselves Communists, Conservatives, Fascists, Feminists - anything they like. That gives them the illusion of autonomy . . ."

The setting for these debates shifts between the urban desolation of London and the bucolic tranquillity of Ireland. There are vivid descriptions of desultory city life; some rural eulogizing includes a well-constructed riverside scene in which Patrick's natural harmony is set against Gavin's grasping intellect.

It is a shame that the twists in the novel are mostly intellectual. Its tone suggests that Patrick has got hold of some useful truth which vaguely concerns that "oansome" thing, but there is something rather gratuitous about all this and, like Patrick's token black friend Joe, it doesn't convince.

Notional doubles

Patricia Craig

DAVID MURE
The Last Temptation
253pp. Buchan and Enright. £8.95.
0907675 166

At the start of David Mure's engrossing novel the unnamed narrator, whom we may take to be the real-life Intelligence Officer Guy Liddell, experiences his own death as a kind of translation to the other side of the looking-glass. Characters called Alice, the Duchess and the Red King duly appear, the last, as in the original story, snoring his head off and possibly conjuring up the others as figments of his dream. Mure, at this point, has appropriated some of Lewis Carroll's dialogue, putting Tweedledee's lines in Alice's mouth, and Alice's in his hero's (it's as well to remember that the real-life Alice was also nicknamed Liddell). A cliché joke soon alerts us to the theme of the novel: espionage matters. "You know very well you're not real" (Alice declares); "Notional," murmured the Duchess, discreetly.

"There is . . . the entirely fictitious double agent, the 'notional' double agent who never exists at all save in the minds or imagination of those who have invented him and those who believe him", J. C. Masterman says in his book *The Double-Cross System* (1972), a work on which David Mure's narrator has been indignantly ruminating, the looking-glass faculty for remembering forwards enabling him to get wind of its appearance (Guy Liddell died in 1958). He is aggrieved because he commissioned this report himself, in 1945, on the understanding that to publish it would be in breach of the Official Secrets Act; he selected the author (who becomes "Tortoise" in the novel) for reasons not exactly flattering to him, the main one being that he hadn't noticed how Hitler's opponents within the *Abwehr* had contributed to the success of the cherished "double-cross" system; and therefore could be relied upon to give full credit to the Security Service, laying emphasis on the brilliance of its wartime recruits. It was necessary to get this view expressed in some official document or other, to obscure the suspicion that the Service had acquired a saboteur or two with its intake of accomplished civilians. Burgess, Philby, Maclean and Blunt were all on the spot, in one capacity or another.

Why, in fact, did Burgess and Cox so avidly take up spying, and why did the British Intelligence Service virtually give them *carte blanche* to get on with it? David Mure has set himself the task of accounting for these peculiarities, without going out of his way to discredit anyone. His novel, after its playful opening, settles down to simulate ordinary autobiography: we're not, in fact, being offered a Lewis Carroll parody, but a book which uses certain of Carroll's motifs to make a decorative framework for its serious concerns. The author, for example, attaches names from the *Alice* adventures to his own cast of characters: the Duchess and his Pig Baby are Burgess and Maclean, the Red Queen is Anthony Blunt, and so on. This device procures the appearance of fiction for what seems like a fairly well-informed interpretation of the facts.

Mure's suppositions are certainly striking. One of his aims is to show how self-effacement and loyalty to your employers can land you in the soup, or at least block your chance of promotion, given that the priorities of governments and Intelligence outfits do not stand still. What was indubitably a right action in 1940, for example, can start to look very different once a new climate of opinion has set in. The experiences of the narrator illustrate the point. Born in "a Scotch mist", from which he eventually concludes he never emerged, the fictional Liddell, by the mid-1920s, has moved from the Special Branch, where he started after the war (selflessly relinquishing his ambition to be a professional cellist), to the "B" or Counter-Espionage Division of MI5, working under Brigadier Harker and Sir Vernon Kell ("Lion" in the novel). He has also, through his affection for a girl called Alice (what else?), student of Higher Mathematics and first president of the Cambridge University Communist Society, gained a certain understanding of the Marxist outlook, which at this point he equates with a

sensible desire to reform society in a moderate way.

However, around the same time (October 1924) we have the affair of the Zinoviev letter. The narrator is more or less instructed to vouch for the genuineness of this dramatic communist document; though he knows perfectly well it's a forgery, his duty to the electorate must oblige him to take the opposite standpoint. He's fairly easily persuaded, and a Labour defeat at the poll is duly ensured.

Throughout the early 1930s, the narrator's busy consolidating his friendship with a young Cambridge don, the Red Queen, and a couple of undergraduates, the Duchess and the Red Knight (Philby). Two of the three he puts up successfully for membership of his club. Some time after war has broken out, we find the head of "B" Division (as the narrator has now become) merrily allocating Intelligence work to his leftist friends, and not only for private reasons; the need to get Russia into the war, he might have argued, surely put Soviet-endorsed agents among the most valuable of MI5's recruits. The word "spying" isn't uttered until 1941, when the Dribber incident - the explosion of this MI5 "mole" from the Communist Party - alerts at least one Intelligence Officer to the fact that a Soviet agent must be at work within the Security Service. Oddly enough, since it was he - Maxwell Knight ("the White Knight", a colleague of the narrator's and head of the sub-division known as B5(b)) - who had Blunt suspended from an Intelligence course at the beginning of the war, this officer doesn't immediately put his finger on the Red Queen.

In fact, a good deal more might have been made of the White Knight's eccentricities, among which was an utter distaste for Soviet Russia, an attitude he stuck to even when it was entirely encouraged from above. Among the papers he kept writing on the topic of communism was one entitled "The Communist is not Dead"; this was certainly submitted to Guy Liddell, who took its allegations more seriously than anyone else. The author of this document finally destroyed it in an act of pique at its failure to make a suitable impression. If he'd waited until 1943, when a Soviet massacre of Polish officers was brought to light, he might have found an audience slightly more receptive to his views.

Mure uses the Katyn massacre to account for the change of heart he attributes to the Red Queen; according to this version of events, Blunt had repented of his spying by 1944, when he came clean to the narrator, assuring him of his intention to give it up: a promise which he kept. Blunt comes out of this story with his integrity intact. So does the central figure in the book, who never subscribed to the extreme views held by his friends, and always acted to achieve the effect most dear to his employers at any given moment. His character, perhaps, suffers a certain diminution in steadfastness, as one political objective turns into another in looking-glass fashion; but what can he do? He needs to be as flexible as a slithy tove to keep pace with changing Security requirements. First Russia must be handled carefully, then America. After the War comes the Cold War. The conditions prevailing in 1951 make it necessary that Guy Burgess should be tacitly encouraged to scarp along with Maclean - the alternative being a very unwelcome spy trial, complete with disclosures that would certainly annoy the Americans.

The *Last Temptation*, at this point, departs from the facts as they are generally known: MI5 historian "Nigel West", for example, records that Guy Liddell was "agitated" on May 28, 1951 to learn of the diplomats' departure. "Who warned Burgess?" West asks. "The trail ended dead beyond Blunt . . .". Mure's narrator refers to an incident in 1955, when Philby was named in the House of Commons as "the so-called Third Man who tipped off the Duchess and Pig Baby that the dogs were after them", and adds: "So far as I know, it was only the Red Queen and I who had rendered this service . . .": for purely patriotic reasons, naturally.

All of which makes fascinating reading. Judicious conjecture enlivens the historical and biographical materials of the story; even if things didn't happen exactly as Mure has it, his suppositions should outrage no one's sense of the believable.

Cut-off points

David Trotter

ALAN SINFIELD (Editor)
Society and Literature 1945-1970
266pp. Methuen. £11.50 (paperback, £5.95).
041631760 X

The purpose of the series to which this book belongs is to set the literature of different periods "directly" into its historical context. "Each book thus not only provides facts unobtainable elsewhere in a single volume, but also leads to a rich and intellectually stimulating reading by stressing the importance of events and ideas to the works of English literature." It is a respectable aim, and one carried out here with fair success.

The only discordant note is struck by Alan Sinfield's introduction, which displays a mixture of sansculotism and boyish charm strikingly at odds with the imperturbable conscientiousness of the essays follow. Sinfield insists that the setting of literature directly into context will precipitate a fundamental revision of categories and values. He may be right. But this particular apocalypse has been in the air for some time now, and might even come to pass if less energy were devoted to prophecy and rather more to concrete demonstrations. It is not likely to be brought any closer by the hilarity which overcomes him at the prospect of wholesale discomfiture. "Is this radical contextualizing of literature not saving off the branch we are sitting on? Quite probably, but that is better than sitting on the fence upon which the branch is going to fall anyway!" (The only "branch" in danger of being lopped off by this little flurry is the metaphor of "radical" innovation.)

The objection would be petty, were it not that in his excitement Sinfield omits to explain why the volume he has edited should confine itself to the period 1945-1970. Other volumes in the series have been more ambitious: *The Later Middle Ages*, *The Eighteenth Century*, *The Romantics*, *The Victorians*, 1900-1930. Why should the period 1945-1970, notable neither for its literary riches nor for its distinct-

ness as an epoch, merit a volume to itself? 1945 seems a plausible terminus, but what is so special about 1970? The choice turns out to be something of an obstacle.

Overall, the book informs rather more consistently than it stimulates. Alistair Davies and Peter Saunders survey the relation between literature, politics and society. Jonathan Dollimore considers writing and debates about sexuality. Stuart Laing contributes nicely judged essays on the production of literature, as artefact and as concept, and on the novel. Sinfield himself writes forlornly about varieties of religion and perceptively about the theatre and its audiences.

Some contributors seem a little unclear as to why the information they are providing should stop dead at 1970. Davies and Saunders are so keen to extend the scope of their argument that they describe Mrs Thatcher as another, more ruthless, version of Edward Heath. But the topic most severely curtailed by the choice of period is that of Britain's changing role in the world. It figures rather elusively in several essays, but is never granted the full account it surely deserves. How could it be, without an analysis of the post-war era as a whole?

The choice of period also damages the claim to offer "rich and intellectually stimulating" interpretations. It damages the best essay in the book, Andrew Crozier's account of the emergence of a poetic canon during the 1950s and 1960s. Crozier perceives in Movement verse a preoccupation with discrete moments of experience, and a reluctance to allow the people and places described to speak for themselves. "Occasions, however necessary they may be to poets, are not felt to be trustworthy." Occasions serve to establish the masterful autonomy of the poet, or the masterful ingenuity with which he can deploy verbal figures to readjust the relation between himself and the world. "In these poems we detect in the poet's authority a relentless determination of poetic discourse and foreclosure of its intended audience."

Crozier then shows how this poetic "discourse" was translated into critical commonplace by the controversy surrounding the *New*

Lines anthologies. He distinguishes between the attacks mounted by Al Alvarez and by Charles Tomlinson, arguing that the former rejected the personal and social attitudes implicit in Movement poetry, but not their aesthetic configuration. "What Tomlinson objects to as the imposition of the poet's mental conceit of himself . . . on that which is beyond himself might be seen, moreover, as the very thing argued for by Alvarez in *The New Poetry*, with the difference that risk and extremity are the mental conceits preferred to gentility." The "discourse" shared by Movement and confessional poetry involves a projection of authority on to people and places. In Crozier's view, Tomlinson's writing represents a vivid and unjustly neglected alternative to this consensus. It is an important case, resourcefully made.

Or half-made. All three of Crozier's canonical poets were beginning, around 1970, to write in ways that challenged the projection of a mental conceit on to the world. In *Crow*, Ted Hughes imagined a protagonist who is a site of conflicting impulses, rather than a stabilizing and authorizing presence. Larkin was writing poems like "The Building" and "The Old Fools" whose bleak secularism is turned directly against the controlling ironies of poet and reader alike. Seamus Heaney's experience of the Troubles produced poems in which people and places do speak for themselves. Crozier might want to argue that there is an underlying continuity of discourse, or that critical commonplace had by this time diverged considerably from the poetry which generated it. (Attempts have certainly been made to recuperate *Crow* as the projection of a mental conceit, not least by Hughes himself.) But his thesis will not come home until it has taken account of such developments - developments which would be illuminated by a contextual analysis. It is prevented from doing so, here, as much by constraints of period as by constraints of space.

Crozier's essay shows what can be done. In general, I would say, Sinfield and his contributors have managed to compress a large amount of valuable information into a single volume. But it may not be quite the right volume.

The periodicals, 15: Critical Quarterly

John Lucas

C. B. COX (Editor)
Critical Quarterly
Volume 26, nos 1 and 2, 1984
192pp. Manchester University Press.
Annual subscription: personal, £12.50;
institutional, £15. Single copies of this double issue, £8.
0011 1562

Critical Quarterly is now twenty-five years old. It was set up, C. B. Cox tells us in his introductory essay to this anniversary edition, to replace and at the same time to offer an alternative to *Scrutiny*. Leavis's journal had ceased publication in 1953, and by then had apparently lost an "impulse to advocacy". Narrow, puritanical, condemnatory, it might well have taken as its chosen motto, Cursed be dullards whom no Canon stuns.

The new quarterly was to be very different. As well as encouraging "high standards of lucid English", the editors "committed ourselves to advocacy by printing new poems in each issue, often by unknowns, and by our choice of recent writers to be featured".

Who were those unknowns? Which were the new poems? We are told that the journal "was particularly influential in publishing 'Movement poetry'". In so far as I can make any sense of that statement, it is that Cox and A. E. Dyson influenced taste because they published poems by writers associated with the Movement. But *New Lines* came out in 1955, and by the late 1950, when the Quarterly began, most of the poets Robert Conquest had included in his anthology were busy denying that they had ever had anything in common. Cox goes on to say that perhaps the magazine's "principal success was that so many well-known poems first appeared in its pages . . .". The crucial question is whether he considers any of those poems that subsequently became well-known to be any good?

I suppose Cox might reply that it isn't for him to decide, since his journal is essentially concerned with an ideal of openness. "Always we have invited articles from contributors of widely different points of view. In 1978 Bernard Bergonzi and Terry Eagleton wrote about literature and politics, and this produced a lively correspondence from both left and right." But reading those sentences makes me think that there is an openness so wide as to let just about anything through, with the result that in the end nothing seems very important. Perhaps for this reason there seems to be no group of poets or critics definitely linked to the journal, giving it its tone, its style. Cox mentions among his regular contributors Bergonzi, Bradbury and Lodge, and the first and last of these have articles in the current number. But they don't represent either at his best (though I realize that in order to fulfil promises they may have had to dip into their bottom drawers); and while there have been marvellous pieces in *Critical Quarterly* - I especially remember Empson's great essay on "The Ancient Mariner" - its overall blandness means that the whole always feels to be less than some of the parts.

For *Critical Quarterly* doesn't really operate as a critical journal at all. By far the majority of its essays are exercises in appreciation. Nothing wrong with that, perhaps; and there is certainly room for a magazine that promotes or re-discovers the work of the unjustly forgotten. But in fact most of the subjects of *Critical Quarterly*'s essays are the justly forgotten or, more rarely, the justly forgotten. Which is where blandness becomes a considerable liability. For what provokes the best criticism is invariably the strong antipathy of good to bad. In the case of *Critical Quarterly* it is usually impossible to tell the bad from the good.

Even the review section lacks bite. This is perhaps because it is tucked away at the back of the journal and also because the reviews are so short as to be of little value. Only very occasionally

is anything as substantial as a review article allowed. Nor is it easy to discover the basis on which books are chosen for review. Does anyone decide the matter, or does it just happen? A journal which announces its desire to encourage a high standard of lucid English ought surely to want to discourage the other sorts? The most effective form of discouragement is criticism: swift, ruthless, damning. But *Critical Quarterly* seems actively to discourage such criticism, and in this respect it feels very much a product of the soggy sixties. It is probably for this reason that the general level of prose is pretty undistinguished and it may be significant that Cox's lengthy introduction to the anniversary is particularly badly written.

It is also extraordinarily complacent. Cox prides himself on the seminars which have grown out of the magazine's activities. At one, "an able, upper-class girl from Bedales found herself arguing with a working-class Lancashire lad of considerable intelligence. They were fascinated with each other, as if confronted by a creature from Mars." Why call one a "girl" and the other a "lad"? What levels of condescension are packed into the phrase "considerable intelligence"? And how can you think that you have even *tried* to come to terms with the nature of their confrontation if you dissolve it in that uselessly crude and semi-literate cliché? Is this what Cox means by "high standards of lucid English"?

Cox and Dyson are or were right to worry about the effects of much that was done in the name of progressive education. In the 1960s, and one can hardly complain because they used the journal as a platform from which to air their concern. But *Critical Quarterly*'s educational position seems to me at one with its literary-critical stance: it is bland, emulative, and characteristic of that decade in its unwillingness to ask the hard questions, free the difficult choices.

Choice acts

Chris Baldick

FRANK LENTRICCHIA
Criticism and Social Change
173pp. University of Chicago Press. £12.75.
0226 471993

Frank Lentricchia here resumes the argument begun in his polemical study of American literary theory *After the New Criticism* (1980), this time attempting to offer a positive and activist antidote to the quietist, politically paralytic consequences of Deconstructionist doctrine in America. The unlikely hero of the piece is the maverick Kenneth Burke, from whose enormously eclectic writings Lentricchia culls the elements of a socially responsible American criticism to pit against the Prufrockian sterility of the Yale school.

Given the notoriously omnivorous range of Burke's writings, we can be given only a highly, and here frankly, selective "Burke", one whom Lentricchia sees not only as an American Oramsi but as a precursor of both Marcuse and structuralism, and above all as an *un-Foucault* in his concern with discourse as power. Burke's strength in this account lies in his holding fast to the socially active conception of literature embodied in classical rhetoric against the "purposiveness without purpose" propounded by modern theorists from Kant to Paul de Man.

But this was more than a rearguard action. Lentricchia shows that Burke (or at least "Burke") was already deconstructing the active human subject way back in 1945, but drawing conclusions entirely at odds with the "cunning nihilism" of de Man and the Yale school. At issue here is the concept central (to use a blasphemous term) to the conservatism of the deconstructive case: "undecidability". The undecidability of all discourse, according to the decision of de Man and his followers, spells (or forgives, for we know not what we do) paralysis and historical despair. For Lentricchia's "Burke" on the other hand it is precisely this undecidability which tilts all subjects, all discourses, into the mêlée of historical struggle, where the instability of the languages of power puts everything up for grabs. The consequences of undecidability, then - the logic is irresistible - are still open to decision.

Decision, choice, and responsibility are the terms of Lentricchia's strenuous activism. Against the threat of growing professional cynicism fuelled from Yale, he asserts that literary intellectuals, as intellectuals, can make a difference - however modest - in political and ideological struggle; indeed as transmitters of cultural tradition they are "always already" making a difference, however much this responsibility may be masked by the formalist theoretical suppression of history. This is a necessary and salutary act of resistance, although the ground on which Lentricchia fights it out is not the most secure. At the most general level, he appears to be preaching the doctrine of free will against the heresarchs of no-will. Alternately attracted and repelled by the strong antinomian tradition in American thought, Lentricchia allows the "active soul" of Emerson's American Scholar to haunt the pages of this book in competition with Marxism. "An American ('Self-reliant') Marxism", he writes, "is fundamentally an absurd proposition", to which the alternative offered is "Marx without science". As anxious as any Western Marxist to repudiate the determinist bogey of teleology and the base/superstructure model, Lentricchia starts out by making the massive concession that for him Marxism is just another rhetoric, with no claim to "truth". In which case why one should adopt it rather than the rhetoric of the Flat Earth Society - except as a purely arbitrary exercise of free will - remains a mystery.

For a radical literary theorist, Lentricchia has been fishing in strange (that is, native) waters, but from his reading of Burke he has landed several surprising insights into the politics of literary tradition, which are essential to an understanding of the current theoretical struggle in America. "Whenever the pulpit is usurped by a formalist", wrote Emerson, "then is the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate". Still in the front line of resistance to the incumbent nihilism, Lentricchia's most powerful address is to the very morale of literary study.

Criminal proceedings

T. J. Binyon

JOHN MALCOLM
A Back Room in Somers Town
158pp. Collins. £6.95.
000 231391

A few hours after art-dealer Willie Morton has shown Tim Simpson, the hero-narrator of this novel, a not particularly valuable painting by Mary Godwin, one of Sickert's followers, he is murdered and the painting stolen. Simpson, who works for a firm of investment consultants, is intrigued, and digs into the affair in an amateurish way until he's sent to sort out a business in Brazil - where he unexpectedly finds himself on the scent again. Vivid, lively and original, with well-employed art and business expertise. One or two rough patches don't make it anything less than a very good first novel.

BARBARA PAUL
The Renewable Virgin
215pp. Collins. £6.95.
000 231734 6

Television scriptwriter Rudy Benedict is murdered; but the poison he takes seems to have been intended for beautiful Kelly Ingram, a rising star with a new series and enough oomph to push *Dallas* down to the bottom of the ratings. Further developments are related, in turn, by Kelly herself, by Fiona Benedict, a nineteenth-century historian and Rudy's mother, and by Detective Second Grade Marian Larch of the NYPD. Fresh, interesting and originally told, with a good New York background and some wonderfully slimy characters from the showbiz world.

JAMES MELVILLE
Death of a Daimyo
146pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95
043627694 1

When Yamamoto, boss of the biggest gangster syndicate in western Japan, dies, Superintendent Otani of the Hyogo Prefectural Police Force is in England with his wife Hanae, visiting their daughter, son-in-law and grandson. It's his deputy, Inspector Kimura, therefore, who has to cope with the consequences of the battle for Yamamoto's throne, but to his surprise Otani discovers that the struggle even makes ripples on the surface of a garden-party in Cambridge. As well planned and as subtly executed as any of the five earlier Superintendent Otani novels; and James Melville extracts a good deal of quiet humour from Otani's experiences of English life.

TED WOOD
Dead in the Water
171pp. Collins. £6.95.
000 231381 2

Former Toronto policeman Reid Bennett, a Vietnam veteran who has lost his job and his wife after being too rough with three rapists (one dead, two badly hurt), is glad to relax as the one-man police force of Murphy's Harbour, a summer tourist resort in Ontario. But, of course, crime, violence and murder can - and do - come even to Murphy's Harbour. An interesting first novel; a bit rough at the edges perhaps, like Reid himself, but straightforward and unselfish, with a good surprise packed in the ending. And Sam, Reid's Alsatian, is certainly a character in his own right.

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July 1984

EUROPA PUBLICATIONS
18 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JN.

£50 (UK)

The passing of power

David French

MAX BELOFF
Wars and Welfare: Britain 1914-1945
 281p. Edward Arnold. £18.95 (paperback, £7.95).
 0 7131 6163 9

In 1914 Britain was a Great Power in a world of Great Powers. By 1945 she was demoted to the second eleven in a world dominated by the two Super Powers. The theme of Max Beloff's book is how it was that this decline in Britain's external power was not accompanied by major domestic upheavals. Russia went communist; Italy and Germany went fascist; but Britain remained comparatively tranquil. Why?

Some clues to the answer are provided in the title of the book. Britain won her wars and despite the still popular image of the inter-war period as a social wasteland - one long road to Wigan Pier - everyday life improved for most of the population for much of the time. However, Lord Beloff's book is weakest when it examines the social and economic realities underpinning Britain's declining power-base. His treatment of these questions is simply too cursory to be satisfactory and the student will have to look elsewhere for the details. But to be fair he makes it clear from the outset that he is writing political history and he has an admirable understanding of the political reasons for the comparative tranquillity of change in Britain.

Victory in the First World War seemed to vindicate British institutions but except for the very perceptive it also hid the reality of her diminishing power in the world. It was a victory which was only made possible by French and Russian soldiers and American dollars. The twists and turns of wartime diplomacy cannot

be understood without reference to the need to conciliate, and in some senses to appease the allies. In 1918 the British public seemed to want social reform, but quickly discovered they did not want to pay for it. They rejoiced that more of the map was painted red than ever before but refused to be conscripted to defend it. They wanted to return to the half-remembered world of Edwardian England, but a world shorn of its most disturbing features, the Liberal Party, the People's Budget and ultimately Lloyd George. The dominant politicians of the inter-war period, MacDonald and Baldwin, conspired - in the figurative sense, for Beloff is quick to acquit MacDonald of plotting to form the National Government - to keep things quiet at home and abroad. Beloff devotes considerable space to MacDonald and Baldwin's efforts to eliminate the Liberal Party and Lloyd George as forces for radical change. Baldwin saw "the Goat" as someone who had to be consigned to the wilderness lest he destroy the Conservative Party in the same way as he had destroyed the Liberals. Similarly Baldwin admitted Labour within the pale of the constitution and so avoided the polarization which accompanied the rise of socialist parties elsewhere in Europe.

MacDonald was only too happy to come in on his terms. Once in power his first concern was to prove that his was a national party and not simply the political mouthpiece of the trade unions. Occupation of the seats of power was more important than the carrying out of radical policies. Beloff suggests that the second Labour Government's failures were due to the fact that "its socialist vision of a world in which production for use should replace production for profit was of no assistance when trying to remedy the ills of an existing capitalist society". When they did formally join forces in 1931 they succeeded in making the National

Government a force for stability. The author is right to remind us that the government's domestic record ought to be compared with that of France or Germany in the 1930s rather than Britain in the 1950s. In foreign policy both Baldwin and MacDonald agreed that prosperity at home and peace abroad were synonymous. Their departure in 1937 did not mark a radical break with what had gone before. Rearmament could not be more rapid both because of public horror at the very thought of another war and because of the widely held assumption, not least in the Treasury and Cabinet, that too much money spent on armaments would retard or even reverse Britain's recovery from the slump. Britain was on the winning side in the Second World War for the same reason that she was in the First: her allies propped her up. The creation of the atomic bomb was symptomatic of how power had passed across the Atlantic. Many of the discoveries on which the bomb was based were made in Britain, but only the Americans had the resources and space to exploit them. "Where

could one have put British Los Alamos?"

This book will contain few surprises for anyone with more than a passing familiarity with the specialist literature published on this period in the past twenty years. It lacks the broad grasp of social history which distinguished A. J. P. Taylor's *English History 1914-6* and which can still delight the reader. For example, although Beloff notes "the timidity which is the common characteristic of most of the nation's political leaders during the inter-war period", he does not pursue Taylor's intriguing observation that in the period covered by this book the historian "has on his hands a [sexually] frustrated people. The restraint exercised in their private lives may well have contributed to their lack of enterprise elsewhere."

Beloff's book will not entirely replace Taylor's on undergraduate reading-lists and public library shelves. But it does provide the student and general reader with an up-to-date account of the high politics of the period and it is to be very much welcomed for that reason.

Captain Flood

I.
 A traceless stream-and-cloud life.
 The young spider wrapping her daydress round
 And round the windy hedges.
 Dew hangs in sparks in recesses.
 A wardrobe of unfilled forms.
 A ghost-ship, rigged with cobwebs.
 Sailed by the spider all day into night.

A net spread across rushing twilight.
 The stream without banks.

II.
 Her interesting silk clothes made
 More interesting by the rain on them
 As a web is drenched in sparks. He
 Approached her holding his hat
 As if he wished to tear it apart. After church
 They strolled through the landscape of sawmills
 And timber enterprises and a mission-station
 At Godspeed, which is walking-pace.
 Three m.p.h. His family it was held

Hereditary wrecking-rights, nevertheless he became
 A sea-captain.

III.
 He had his own ship's bell installed when
 He took command, and on retirement took it home.
 And struck it now, upon the stoop. The rain
 Beat down upon the tiles of all the houses
 That were unmoved, like crocodiles; the brass bell
 Bellowed like a trumpet, time had slowed down
 In each other's company. Big flies blew past
 From the butcher's, crammed with blood.
 Flying at Godspeed.

IV.
 As he described his traceless
 Stream-and-cloud life at sea, he held her arm.
 And her heart melted like a tide that turned
 Backward upon its own wave, all those years
 Without women, butchers, or sawdust, without
 Spiders or interesting silk clothes

Among real ships with violent captains
 Full ships not unfilled forms sailing
 As she did, for the pleasure of it.
 In her billows of silk sails; and every crew-member
 With feet scrupulously clean to forestall brine-rot;

She sighed, her berth empty and wishing
 Almost aloud for a sailor of her own
 Clambering the rigging, hammocked in her shrouds.

PETER REDGROVE

A collector of rarities

John Buxton

PRUDENCE LEITH-ROSS
The John Tradescants: Gardeners to the Rose and Lily Queen
 320pp. Peter Owen. £20.
 0720606128

Twenty years ago Mea Allan published her pioneer study of the Tradescant family, an admirable book which is now out of print. A new work therefore is timely, all the more so because it is well-researched and can supplement and correct the earlier book (to which the author shows due respect), and it is a pleasure to read. It provides lives of the two Tradescants, father and son, and of Hester Tradescant, widow of the younger man whose unsuccessful contention with a slick lawyer resulted in the museum at Oxford being called the Ashmolean, not the Tradescantian. For the Tradescants were not only interested in gardening and in introducing and growing "rare" plants; they were both, as Parkinson called the elder, "worthy, diligent and painful observers and preservers both of plants and all other natures varieties". "Tradescant's Rarities" in his house in South Lambeth became one of the sights of London in the 1630s, and was the first such collection to be open to the public. The entrance fee of sixpence included a visit to the gardens, from which surplus plants might be purchased. Very suitably a museum of Garden History has been established in the redundant church of St Mary, in whose yard the Tradescants are buried.

The elder Tradescant, whose family seems to derive from Suffolk not, as Antony Wood suggested, from Holland, must have gained a reputation as a skilled gardener fairly early, for he was employed by Lord Salisbury at Hatfield House from January 1, 1610 at the substantial salary of fifty pounds a year. In his first year there he was sent over to Holland to buy more vines - Lord Salisbury had already received 30,000 as a gift from the French Ambassador's wife - and on his return he was sent down to Cranborne Manor, then being reconstructed, to plant trees. Next autumn he again went to Holland to buy a variety of plants, including 800 tulip bulbs, which had been introduced into England thirty years before by Charles de l'Ecuse, then on to Paris, where he met the King's gardeners, Jean Robin and his son

Vespasian, with whom the Tradescants were to exchange plants on a number of occasions. From Hatfield, after Lord Salisbury's death, Tradescant went on to Lord Wotton at Canterbury, where he put his son into King's School (in spite of which he was later said to be "clearly uncivilized"); then, after journeys to Archangel, where his journal provides what is rather grandly called "The Earliest Russian Flora", and to Algiers and the Balearics, in 1624 he entered the service of the Duke of Buckingham. He entrusted Tradescant with collecting rarities from all over the world, through seamen and diplomats. Probably Tradescant had already begun his own collection, but his new position would have enabled him greatly to extend it.

After the murder of the Duke in 1628, Tradescant seems to have been financially independent and he soon bought the property in South Lambeth where he and his son and daughter-in-law were to remain. The younger Tradescant was said to have "not a single streak of his father's vigour", but he was a skilled gardener and was in Virginia collecting plants for the King when his father died; he was there again in 1642 and 1653. He was perhaps less concerned than his father had been with the Collection of Rarities, and he unwisely allowed Elias Ashmole to pay for the publication of *Musaeum Tradescantianum* in 1656; three years later, when he had arrived home "distempered" (drunk) he signed a deed of gift of the collection to Ashmole. After his death his widow Hester suffered persecution from Ashmole until in exasperation she told him to take the stuff away immediately. Four years later she was found drowned in her garden pond. None the less when Ashmole offered the collection to the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in 1683 he called it "Mr Tradescant's Collection of Rarities".

In two appendixes, *Plantarum in Horto Catalogus*, published in 1634, and *Musaeum Tradescantianum*, 1656, are reprinted (as they were by Mea Allan), and in a third is given a list of the plants received at South Lambeth from 1629 to 1633. Some corrections are made to Mea Allan's claims for the Tradescants' introductions of plants, but the London Plane derived from seeds received in Oxford by the elder Bobart from Montpellier. Finally, how strange it is that one of the greatest of English gardeners, the elder Tradescant, had no sense of smell.

A plantsman's preferences

Christopher Lloyd

GRAHAM STUART THOMAS
The Art of Planting, or The planter's handbook
 323pp. Dent. £12.95.
 0 460 04640 3

Graham Stuart Thomas is a supreme plantsman. His best writing is descriptive of the great range of plants that he knows and appreciates so well. *The Art of Planting*, wherein he treats of "the use of plants as furnishings for ornamental gardens", should have found him at his pithiest and most cogent, for, as Gardens Adviser to the National Trust for many years, he has unrivalled experience of this subject.

In the event, although the many inspired flashes make for some stimulating reading, this is a disappointing ramble, lacking in focus and cohesion, often showing a surprising reluctance to proffer the guidance and positive lead that one would expect. So often refusing to take a committed standpoint, he leaves the reader in a state of confusion. "Some of us," he writes, "are lucky enough to inherit a rectangular garden bounded by walls." Does the luck consist in the inheritance; the rectangle, the walls or all three together? A little later we are told that "much can be made of an uncompromising rectangle", so the rectangular garden is not such a fortunate heritage after all, and since walls would effectively scupper attempts at concealing the boundaries, what luck are we left with?

A long chapter on "Colour, its Value and Uses in the Garden" is non-sequential, darting about from one idea to another, while in a section headed "The Foliage of Shrubs", a quarter of the space is taken up with a discussion of ground-covering materials such as bark

and shingle. There is a good deal of potted history with no claim to originality which might well have been dispensed with by referring the reader to any historical work of the author's preference, thus allowing more space for the expression of his own views. These are in notably short supply in certain areas. Roses are among the most difficult components to integrate in a garden; their popularity makes them an urgent consideration, yet Thomas has remarkably little to say here. A chapter on water gardens is very sketchy but is followed by seventeen pages on fragrance in the garden. The author disarmingly admits that this has no relevance to the art of planting, but he had given a lecture on the subject and wished to incorporate the material. The reader is often fobbed off by being referred to other of Thomas's many books, when it is here and now that enlightenment on the subject in hand is required. The all-too-numerous and intrusive references to the National Trust which busily interrupt the flow of the writing, are another irritation. Even if the book was published "in association with The National Trust", the owners and addresses of all the gardens mentioned could have been discreetly listed in an appendix. The second half of the book consists of lists of plants for special purposes. These are so stark as to give little idea of whether we should like them, let alone whether the author does. But the chronological flowering lists of plants he does admire could be very useful.

There are many photographs - thirty-two pages in colour and thirty in black-and-white. They are unattractively presented with heavy white margins. Some of the black-and-whites are no more than plant portraits. The explanatory captions beneath each photograph are often far from adequate.



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The science of science

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KURT HÜBNER
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RICHARD J. BERNSTEIN
Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, hermeneutics, and praxis
 248pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50 (paperback).
 £7.50.
 0 631 13429 8
STEWART RICHARDS
Philosophy and Sociology of Science: An introduction
 210pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50 (paperback).
 £5.95.
 0 631 13411 5

These are exciting times for the philosophy of science. With the continuing decline of logical empiricism practitioners have spread themselves over a diversity of alternative points of view, resurrecting older epistemologies and ontologies, and developing new concepts and arguments with unparalleled rapidity. There is no longer any way in which the field can be described and justified as a body of established knowledge, but as an activity it is more interesting than ever. No doubt it is a trivial point, but it is intriguing to reflect that most philosophers of science, for all their meticulous attention to the fine details of arguments and their command of logic, must none the less be committed to incorrect viewpoints: given the current distribution of commitments this apparently must be so. Perhaps when the correct viewpoint emerges it will provide an account of why it is so easy to be rational and yet wrong.

Since logical empiricism ceased to be dominant in the field, two of the most important positions to have thrived and prospered are scientific realism, and relativism or radical contextualism. Both reflect a swing of interest from scientific data and how it is known, to scientific theory and how it is constructed. Both take the fact that a scientific theory is necessarily underdetermined by the data it describes, and use it to justify a more broadly conceived analysis of theory. But whereas realists couch that analysis primarily in terms of ontology and metaphysics, relativists and contextualists deny that such an analysis can be made in formal philosophical terms at all, and hold that theories are created, maintained and evaluated by contingent human activities which are fully intelligible only when related to the actual historical situations in which they occur.

Jerrold L. Aronson offers a clearly written defence of a realist point of view. He takes the task of the philosophy of science to be that of identifying the best theory about scientific theories, and he defends the realist theory as the best. A scientific theory is, he says, an account of the nature of things: it is not primarily a neat way of summarizing phenomena, nor simply a predictive instrument; it is an assertion of what things really exist in nature. Such a theory can, says Aronson, be confirmed inductively; it cannot be confirmed in an absolute sense; that is well known. But it can be confirmed relative to alternative theories: it is possible to show that an item of evidence is more likely if one theory is true than it is if that theory is false and another is true. This leads Aronson to suggest that scientific theories are accounts of nature's basic constituents, and hence metaphysical accounts, which are none the less accepted on empirical grounds, namely that their truth would make the empirical evidence more likely than would the truth of rival theories.

There is much of value in Aronson's book: certainly his combination of realist ontology with inductive confirmation theory is interesting. But Aronson does not say enough about the problems of confirmation theory, and pushes over the crucial question of how far the confirmation of a theory sustains, or should sustain, belief in it, or use of it. Without an

answer to this question it is impossible to relate Aronson's ideas to what we know of the actual historical development of science. Aronson himself takes insufficient interest in this development, and is altogether too insensitive to the many fundamental problems which have been raised by properly detailed accounts of it. This is strikingly evident whenever he discusses actual scientific theories. These are the entities about which Aronson himself is supposed to be offering a theory, and he needs, by his own account, to identify them with care and describe them faithfully, if indeed they can be treated as existent entities to be identified and described. But in fact only travesties of theories appear in Aronson's text, and nothing is discussed in sufficient detail to serve as a proper justification for his views. The question of what exactly a theory is one of the great unsolved problems in philosophy of science, and the tendency to sidestep it is one of the recurring faults in its literature. Like many others, Aronson offers a theory of scientific theories when he lacks even a natural history.

Kurt Hübner's *Critique of Scientific Reason* is a lucid and wide-ranging exposition of a contextualist, anti-realist view of science:

It appears to be an inextinguishable characteristic of people to transform everything which in truth springs from their own invention and design promptly into an objective givenness. The history of physics is a process in which this confusion of our own free constructions with the ontologically real constantly repeats itself.

The general message of the book is a familiar one. Scientific theories are human constructs. Scientific facts are not theory-independent, and cannot serve as independent sources for the validation of theories. The historical development of science is not a movement towards "the truth", but a matter of systems of theories and rules changing so that they become more consistent with each other. And finally, this move to consistency is itself not fully predictable, since specific theories and rules themselves adjust to the uses to which they are put in specific historical contexts.

There are, of course, many presentations of these themes, but Hübner's is particularly well worth reading. He expounds and defends the contextualist viewpoint with great skill, and he illustrates it most impressively, although the great range of the selected illustrations, their frequent technical difficulty, and the depth in

which one or two of them are explored, make his a demanding as well as a rewarding account. Hübner's book was first published in Germany in 1978: it makes the contextualist case against that background and in relation to the writings of the great German philosophers. This not only makes the book of historical interest; it also enhances its philosophical value since its shifted perspective means that familiar themes are presented in what for us are unfamiliar ways.

In the context of our own debates and controversies it would be reasonable to describe Hübner as a relativist, but he himself rejects this appellation and describes his account as a "historistic" one. Hübner takes a relativist analysis of intellectual and social change to imply not merely that it is irreducibly contingent, but that it is altogether arbitrary and capricious, and he would reject the latter claim. Richard Bernstein evidently agrees. He is willing to accept Richard Roty's view that there are no absolute foundations for our knowledge, but unlike Roty he is not willing to refer to this as relativism. Thus, although on many key points of substance Bernstein is very close to Roty in his philosophical views, he presents them as the path beyond relativism, whereas Roty presented his as relativism *per se*. No doubt it is all a matter of taste.

What Bernstein basically wants to do is to move philosophical work away from the fruitless exercise of seeking absolute foundations for scientific knowledge and hence for a rational way of living, and yet to continue to speak of rational activity and of what it involves. This leads him into extended reflections upon hermeneutics, practical human activity and practical reasoning, and to the conclusion that the rational society must avoid undue reliance on the specialist and the expert, and base itself instead upon "dialogue, conversation, undistorted communication, communal judgment, and the type of rational wooing that can take place when individuals confront each other as equals and participants". Much of *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* is in the form of dialogue: its arguments are developed as reflections upon the work of a long succession of other authors. Kuhn, Winch, Feyerabend, Aristotle, Gadamer, Habermas, Roty and Arendt constitute the main structure of the text, with many others packed into the interstices. This makes the book extremely difficult,

since it is in no sense an introduction to the ideas of these authors, and their various esoteric terms and concepts, but very much a meditation upon them. Extensive familiarity with the literature of philosophy is essential for an appreciation of this book, and its appeal is likely to be restricted to a specialized audience.

The continuing diversity of views in the philosophy of science presents the teacher with a dilemma. Should the student be expected to grasp only the "correct" approach, or should all the major current approaches be presented? Aronson, whose book is an advanced teaching text, is content with a compromise. His realist theory is described in the second part of his book; other approaches are described and appraised in what I believe is now called a "second story", which is included as the first part. The "second story" is written precisely so that it vindicates the realist theory which it precedes. When the same sort of compromise makes realism part of the "second story", the overall result is similar: although they get a different account of truth and error, students still get their general survey of the field.

Stewart Richards, in his very elementary text, faces the same dilemma but responds differently. He is well aware of the current diversity of opinions, but is content merely to survey them and to offer only a very restrained commentary. Since his aim is simply to increase the general sensitivity of science students to philosophical and sociological aspects of their activity it is easy to justify his approach. His task is to get students asking questions: what the correct answers might be can be considered later. None the less, this restraint, a curiously homogeneous text in which large and small topics tend to be too smoothly mixed, and a degree of conservatism in the choice of issues, drain some of the life out of the text.

There are, however, very few texts which will serve the purpose for which Richards' is designed. To write such a text is inordinately difficult, far more so than the preparation of a volume for advanced work. And the result, invariably easy to criticize, rushing as it is from topic to topic, and offering accordingly but the barest taste of each. For those involved in the teaching of introductory courses which have to cover a great amount of ground, *Philosophy and Sociology of Science* is certainly worth considering.

mental arithmetic. Only evidence of the former sort need worry us about the ultimate limit to man's rationality, contrary to Wright's tacit implication that all axiom violations are equally damning.

Otherwise the book is informative and potentially revealing for the reader who tries to answer for himself or herself the questions to which the reported findings are based. One such "paper-and-pencil experiment" is the following:

Which cause of death is more likely out of each pair:
 (i) Lung cancer or stomach cancer
 (ii) Murder or suicide?

Most respondents guess lung cancer and murder though statistics show that both stomach cancer and suicide are one and a half times more likely. The reason for the bias has to do with disproportionate media coverage but the decision theory's real achievement is to show how misconceptions in widely different subject-matters can be explained by the same shortcomings in our perceptual apparatus.

Examples of this sort show us that our probabilities are not what they should be. More worrying is the fact that people don't seem to know how good their guesses are going to be. In other words, we tend to be over-confident about the hazy impressions that form the basis of our view of the world. The findings which the book reports have led many psychologists to conclude grimly that "in the face of uncertainty man may be an intellectual cripple".

It may, on the other hand, be, as some economists and philosophers are beginning to suggest, that "subjective expected utility" is not the touchstone of rationality we once thought it was.

Empirical research on the probability issues has been more extensive and the text reflects this fact, though possibly the author devotes insufficient attention to evaluating the implications of the data. Often the evidence suggests that even those familiar with the concepts of probability find it hard to think in probabilistic terms. It is also clear that some studies show that many individuals are either unfamiliar with the probability notion or not very good at

Travel paperbacks

SYBILLE BEDFORD. *A Visit to Don Otavio*. 319pp. Eland Books. £4.95. 0 907871 05 4.
CHARLES MACOMB FLANDRAU. *Viva Mexico*. 294pp. Eland Books. £3.95. 0 907871 20 8.
 Sybille Bedford set out, with a certain reluctance, for Mexico not long after the Second World War; her companion was less enthusiastic and they were joined by a third who made them look positively enterprising. They became the guests of Don Otavio on Lake Chapala. The Mexican temperament presented by their host and his baffling family was unintelligible to them. As in her novels, Sybille Bedford moves gracefully from the particular to the general. She is shrewd about the pleasures and the hardships of travel and there is high comedy in the travellers themselves and their adventures. *A Visit to Don Otavio* was first published in 1960 and reviewed in the TLS of September 16 that year. Charles Macomb Flandrau went to Mexico over forty years earlier, to stay on his brother's coffee plantation. He was born in Minnesota, educated at Harvard, lived much of his life in France and died a recluse. *Viva Mexico* published in the USA in 1908 but never before in this country, is his best book; he discovered in Mexico, as Mrs Bedford later did, that "No hay reglas fijas" ("There are no fixed rules"); and that "in a country where theory and practice are so at variance, personal experience becomes the chart. . . . In just this, I feel sure, lies much of the indisputable charm of Mexico." He has produced a portrait that is both humorous and profound.

S. O.

LADY BRASSEY. *A Voyage in the Sunbeam*. 492pp. Century. £4.95. 0 71260336 0. In 1876, Annie Brassey, accompanied by her husband and four young children, nanny, stewardess and doctor, undertook an eleven-month circumnavigation in a three-masted gaff schooner, the Sunbeam. On the journey they stopped at Madeira, Tenerife, Brazil, the Argentine, Tierra del Fuego, Chile, Tahiti, Hawaii, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Penang, Ceylon, Aden, Suez, Malta, Gibraltar and Lisbon. The voyage starts characteristically with a family swim from the ship when becalmed off Beachy Head; the loss of the children's "charming Persian kitten, Lily" and its recovery; rough weather with several children nearly washed overboard ("Happily the children don't know what fear is. The maids, however, were very frightened") and a sleepless night in a cabin ankle-deep in water. It is soon clear that the author (who had quite a success with her *Journal* when it was published in 1878 and who became Lady Brassey when her wealthy railway contractor husband was given a baronetcy a year before her early death) belongs to that species of indomitable English lady traveller which has contributed so much to travel writing. Although perhaps not in the same class as Gertrude Bell, Gertrude Jekyll or Isabella Bird (her trip was taken for pleasure and the atmosphere is decidedly domestic), Mrs Brassey does share their eye for the picturesque, their crispness of expression and their calm courage. She comes to grips with the technical aspects of navigation, learns Spanish, takes an informed interest in local produce and handicrafts and makes tart observations on the quality of British exports and the comparative civilization of other nations. This is offset by her obvious warmth, her fondness for food, her joy in her children, her passion of animals and her unprejudiced acceptance of all kinds of foreignness: "I have quite made up my mind that I never wish to see another locust as long as I live. I have, however, secured some fine specimens for any one who is curious about them."

L. D.

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR. *Mani*. 331pp. Penguin. £2.95. 0 14 00 95039 9 First published by John Murray in 1958 and reviewed in the TLS of December 19 that year. The Peloponnese points three rocky fingers at the south. At the end of the middle one, south of Sparta, lies the happily remote region of the Mani - the deep Mani. It is surprising to remember that this peninsula of rock, so near the heart of the Levant from which Christianity springs, should have been baptised three whole centuries after the arrival of St Augustine in "Kent." Patrick Leigh Fermor penetrated the deep Mani in the 1950s and evidently had a marvellous time. The resulting book combines maverick erudition, a decorous degree of irresponsibility and an expertly moderated love for rich language, and is remarkably hard to put down.

G. S.

GEOFFREY GRIGSON. *Notes from an Odd Country*. 241pp. Sovereign. £4.95. 0 86299 122 6. The village of Trôo in the Bas-Vendômois, where Geoffrey Grigson has his second home, is "the hub of the odd country of these notes, which is a country of the mind and a portion of France". Ronsard's ancestral home of La Possonnière, a few miles down the Loir at Couture, bears an inscription, "Voluptati et Gratia", which forms an epigraph to this book (first published in 1970 and reviewed in the TLS of September 4 that year). Grigson's pleasure in the Loir countryside takes the form of a journal of the seasons, which subtly intertwines observations of the natural and man-made aspects of this "portion of France" as he steps lightly and learnedly from prehistoric *polissoirs* to Deptford Pinks to the vanishing *troglodytes* of Trôo, thence to musings on Daumier or Ronsard (the tutelary spirit of this volume), and to the everyday rituals of French rural life. Grigsonian inaccessibility peeps out in his comments on Roy Campbell (who failed, it seems, to strike him with a knobkerrie near the BBC), American academics and literary editors who bowdlerize such earthiness as *unum salum et unum siffilum et unum bumbulum*. Claudel, too, appears to attract Grigson's displeasure, but since the pages on which these comments appear are, like a dozen or so others in my copy, so faultily inked as to be illegible it is difficult to be sure.

J. K. L. W.

HENRY JAMES. *A Little Tour in France*. 198pp. Oxford University Press. £3.50. 0 19 281470 2. In the autumn of 1882 Henry James - not yet forty, recently become internationally famous as the author of *Daisy Miller*, and with *Washington Square* published just a year previously - undertook a six weeks' tour of the French provinces in order, as he lightly avowed, to demonstrate the proposition that "though France might be Paris, Paris was by no means France" - and this for the benefit of the "average Anglo-Saxon", more specifically the readers of the *Atlantic Monthly*, which published his account of the tour in 1883 - 4 under the title *En Province*. Much revised, it was brought out shortly afterwards in America in book form as *A Little Tour in France*; in 1900 Heinemann published the first English edition, from which the text of this new paperback re-issue is taken. James's record of his trip - which commenced in Touraine, took him to the south-west, then through Provence, and north again along the Rhône to Burgundy - engagingly blends guidebook-style information with cultural reflection, vivid rendering of place and atmosphere with deft portraiture of *indigènes* encountered on the way; and while it cannot claim to be more than an offering of some choice crumbs from the master's table, it contains enough "good things of the *doux pays*" as well as good writing to please both the lover of France and of James. This new edition has an excellent foreword by Geoffrey Grigson.

R. H.

JOHN KEAY. *Where Men and Mountains Meet: The explorers of the Western Himalayas 1820-75*. 276pp. Century. £4.95. 0 712601961. "And does the road wind uphill all the way? 'Yes, to the very end.'" That Victorian apothegm amply evokes the emotions that must have been felt by John Keay's splendidly diverse band of adventurers, scientists, spies and explorers as they tackled the fearsome terrain of the Himalayas. In the Yarkand Murrey (in 1977) is replete with plangently colorful placenames - on one random page can be found Loh, Rampur, Rudok, Gartok, the sacred lake of Manasarovar and others - and a formidable array of villainous natives. Among the explorers, Joseph Wolff, the Jew turned propagating Christian, whose reverence for the truth caused him to traverse 600 miles of the Hindu Kush naked, is perhaps the most extraordinary, but all have their moments. Yet Keay's book is more than anecdote

and adventure; his scholarship is excellent, his use of sources exemplary, and his style leavens the potentially stodgy litany of mountain-passes and political patrons the book could so easily have become.

D. J.

NORMAN LEWIS. *The Changing Sky: Travels of a novelist*. 254pp. London: Eland Books. £4.95. 0 90781 70 1. First published by Jonathan Cape in 1959, and reviewed in the TLS of July 10 that year. Most of the short pieces collected in *The Changing Sky* appeared in the *New Yorker*, *The Sunday Times*, and the *New Statesman*, and it shows, in the best possible way. These are indeed the travels of a novelist - in Africa, South America, India, Laos, and Spain - but they are the travels of the novelist as outstanding journalist - limpid, controlled, finely understated. Lewis's essay on the Dominican Republic under the dictator Trujillo contains a poignant account of the obligatory monuments that were everywhere erected to the Generalissimo. At first they bore only one inscription - "God and Trujillo." Then townships "were expected to think up original wording for their tributes". Clearly there was safety in hyperbole - something on the lines of "No statesman in the history of the world has done so much for his country." Lewis saw another one over the lunatic asylum in the town of Nigua: "We owe everything to Trujillo", it said.

G. S.

H. V. MORTON. *In Search of England*. 276pp. Methuen. £4.95. 0 413 54490 7. *In Search of Ireland*. 376pp. Methuen. £4.95. 0 413 54850 3. Enthusiasm, more than thoughtful reflection, informs the travel writing of H. V. Morton. Of the simple but engaging events recorded in *In Search of England* - the first of many "In Search" books - the TLS reviewer of July 14, 1927 wrote: "In spite of a too conscientious discursiveness and determination not to be heavy, his genuine appreciation of the beauties of England should stimulate the imagination of other tourists." Morton seeks out famous views, colourful characters, "castles old in story" and anything else which might provide him with a yarn. Period touches, such as the Cornish farmer who grew excited when he first picked up London on his wireless, give the books their special charm, but Morton is less likely to think than to feel, and his feelings are often sentimental. His comments on "the Irish 'Question'" in *In Search of Ireland* (first published in 1930 and reviewed in the TLS of July 14 that year) appear to be little more than the products of kindly wishful thinking: "the most unhappy and regrettable chapter in the history of Great Britain has ended, and the two nations are at last free to make friends". Both of these books, are naturally dated now, but they still have something to offer; an opinion supported by the fact that each has been reprinted about thirty times.

J. C.

V. S. PRITCHETT. *The Spanish Temper*. 219pp. The Hogarth Press. £3.95. 0 7012 1904 1. First published by Chatto and Windus in 1954 (and reviewed in the TLS of April 23 that year) this is a good if not very original introduction to the Spain of the 1950s, based on journeys going back to 1924, and well received when first published. V. S. Pritchett does his best to isolate what he assumes are the unchanging verities of Spanish life, but the trouble is that the country has changed so much in the last thirty years that many of his generalizations, however perceptive at the time, seem inapplicable or out of focus today. He discourses on love, death, Don Juan, dignity, Don Quixote, flamenco, politics and so on, and it is not his fault that he is describing attitudes more common in 1854 than in 1984. The framework of these observations is a tour, his first since the Civil War, through most of Spain taking in Madrid, Seville, Granada, Almería and Barcelona. There is some ebullient descriptive writing and Mr Pritchett's love of the Spanish landscape is palpable throughout. But the mixture of travel-book and philosophical enquiry is not an easy one and each suffers from the other. Perhaps the author should finally consider reissuing his first book, *Marching Spain* (1928), a mannered but rather charming account of a journey on foot through Extremadura.

J. F. T. R.

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